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Defining the universal city. The International Federation for Housing and Town Planning and transnational planning dialogue 1913-1945

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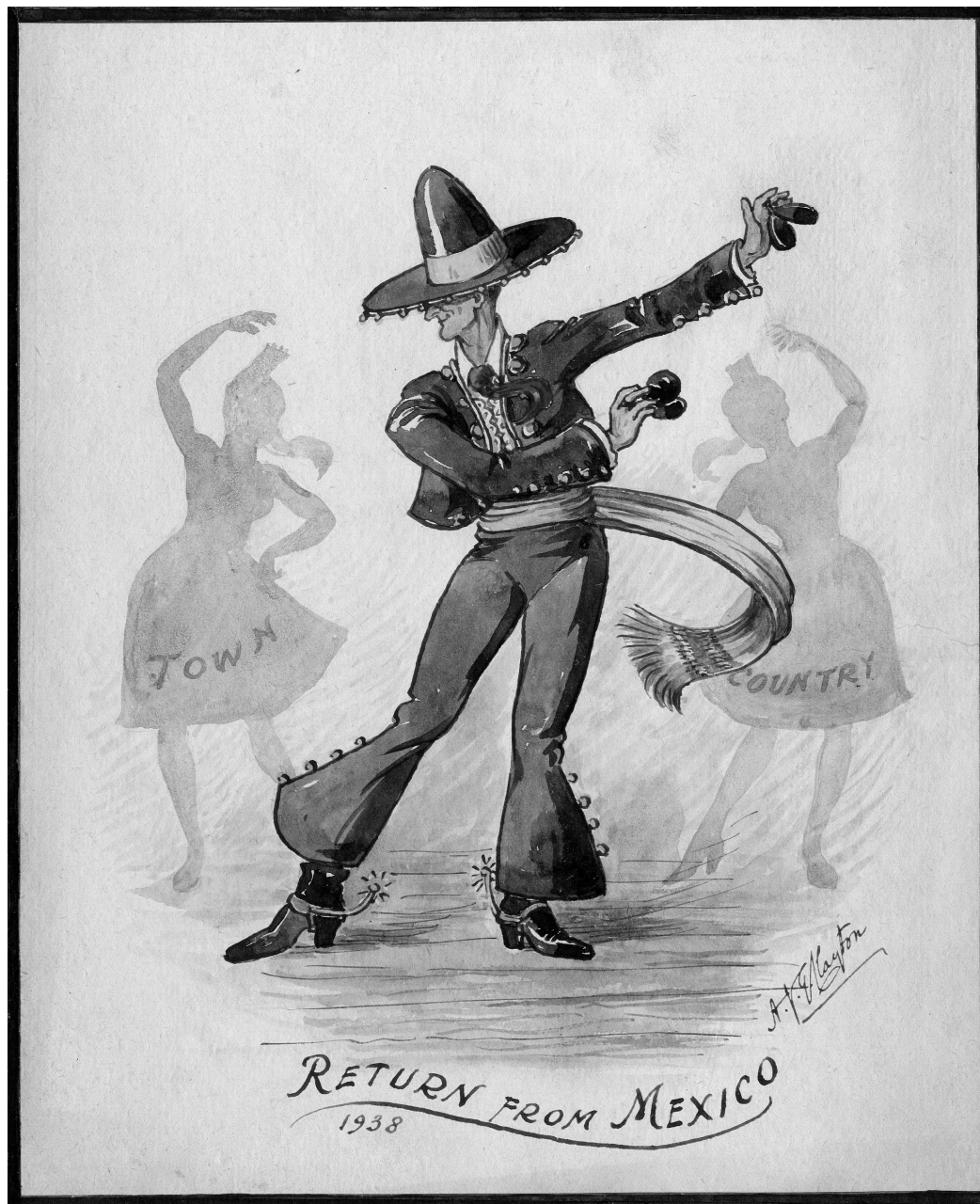
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HOUSING VERSUS PLANNING 1926-1937



[i] Planner George Lionel Pepler (1882-1959) played a vital role in the settling of the housing controversy. As such, he was not just 'dancing' with town and country (planning), but also with planning and housing.

4.1 Introduction

In the first half of the 1920s the IFHTP broadened its old garden city message in terms of regional decentralisation and traded its original propagandistic outlook in for a position as international study platform in order to address the new post-war housing and planning context. At first sight, this reorientation was successful. Helped by the absence of immediate competitors – the *Union Internationale des Villes* (UIV) resurrected itself only at its 1924 congress in Amsterdam; the International Housing Congresses (IHC) never really got back on their feet after the war and eventually was swallowed by the IFHTP in 1926 – it matured from a “vaguely nominal body into one with active membership.”¹ Participation and congress attendance grew tremendously in the course of a few years. This growth was crowned with the amalgamation with the IHC at the 1926 congress in Vienna.

However, the IFHTP could not rest on its laurels. Town planning practice did not follow the designated path of regional decentralisation, as proposed by the IFHTP, indiscriminately. For one thing, in many decentralized extension plans tenements replaced the envisioned cottages. In the Parisian garden suburbs flats had replaced one family houses.² Even in Britain tenements advanced in satellites.³ More important, despite the popularity of suburbanisation, the old cities did not dissolve. On the contrary, they attracted new dynamics. Because of the excessive land values, new volumes in the existing cities usually were high-rise buildings. At its 1926 congress in Vienna the IFHTP for the first time was directly confronted with this trend. Its reaction was conservative: it condemned ‘vertical expansion’ as undesirable and upheld decentralisation to low-rise new settlements as a superior alternative. Nevertheless, it was obvious that the IFHTP could not continue to turn a blind eye on the old city centres. It had to come up with a conceptual regional framework that regarded town and country, city centre and suburbia, high-rise and low-rise as a continuum. Some members even thought coordination was to be taken up at the national level.

The reappraisal of regional planning was greatly hampered by internal turmoil. The exploration of the region had served its goal of pushing back the domination of the British garden city workers, but continental housing reformers thought that because of the focus on regional decentralisation the real issue was being overlooked: providing affordable houses. They held high hopes for the new housing section which was to incorporate the activities of the old IHC. However, the formation of the housing section turned out to be a major obstacle. Some members of the former IHC thought their objectives were not adequately looked after in this housing section. Differences of opinion not just concentrated on different conceptions of housing, but also largely were culturally defined.⁴ This discontent prompted fierce internal debates and consequently a group of dissatisfied housing reformers stepped outside the Federation to pursue their goals in a new independent international housing organisation, initiating almost a decade of endless quarrels and negotiations to reach terms of agreement between both bodies.

New external circumstances affected the activities of the IFHTP as well. The Great Depression entered the picture in the late 1920s. International trade collapsed and personal incomes, tax revenues, prices and profits were deeply affected. The settled political order was challenged; desperate citizens demanded governmental intervention and turned to new radical political movements that offered a promise of immediate relief. Subsequently, the

majority of countries set up relief programs, for example the New Deal in the United States, and most underwent some political upheaval. The political turmoil also coloured the international stage. In various participating countries new authoritarian regimes rose to power. Already in 1922 Mussolini had absorbed all power in Italy, but in the 1930s he was joined by new European dictators: Hitler in Germany (1933), Salazar in Portugal (1932), Franco initiated the Spanish Civil War in 1936 and eventually absorbed power in 1939. These tensions must have reflected in the backing of the IFHTP.

These unfavourable internal and external circumstances posed a new challenge. On the one hand the IFHTP wanted to uphold its successful formula of the previous period, while on the other hand the new situation obviously demanded changes. The IFHTP had to return to the drawing table to reassess its conception of international town planning. Who was to partake in the transnational town planning discussion? How was it to deal with members advocating ideas contrary to the Federation's policies? What steps did it take to consolidate or even expand its international operation? And finally, how was the central message amended to secure a broad backing in the face of discord?

4.2 Internal struggles

The Vienna assignment

The immediate formation of a housing section had been a condition for the merger of the IFHTP and the IHC. So the IFHTP wasted no time. Shortly after the 1926 Vienna congress a memorandum was prepared on the organisation of the new sections. The sections were expected to nominate subjects and contributor's for the congresses of the IFHTP. Moreover, they should respect the rules of the IFHTP and draft their own standing orders. After this memorandum was unanimously approved by the executive committee and the council, a founding meeting for the housing section was scheduled.⁵

On Monday, July 4th 1927 a gathering of 80 delegates from 15 countries, chaired by Sellier, attended this founding meeting in Luxembourg. This party installed a provisional committee to make arrangements for the housing section. The provisional committee consisted of the continental housing reformers de Vielcastel (F), Klöti (CH), Kubista (CZ), Sjöstrand (S), Wibaut (NL) and Wutzky (D); Bruggeman (F), Unwin (UK) and Purdom (UK), represented the bureau of the IFHTP.⁶ This provisional committee expected the bureau to propose standing orders for the housing section and, after these had been agreed upon, to make definite arrangements for an independent, sectional secretariat on the continent. According to the official minutes the housing section had had a good start.⁷ However, correspondence between Hudig and Purdom tells a different story. Hudig warned Purdom to pay heed to a lurking discord. The Luxembourg meeting had been badly prepared, causing many attending former members of the IHC to wonder if their trust in the IFHTP was justified. Hudig rejected Purdom's objection that "a certain sensibility about the independence of the section" had prevented a proper preparation by the bureau. He thought that the section would have welcomed steps by the bureau to enable final decisions at Luxembourg. The section would gladly have accepted a more definite lead. "If it did not want a strong hand, it would have appreciated a firm one."⁸

At the next meeting of the housing section Hudig's fear of revolt became reality. Wibaut, Klöti, Sjöstrand and Wutzky apparently had discussed steps of action before the meeting.

They urged to ignore the earlier memorandum and only to consider the draft standing orders provided by the bureau, before deciding on the location of the housing secretariat. Obviously displeased at being passed over, the attending bureau members grumbling acknowledged that the meeting was allowed to do so, provided that the unity of the organisation as a whole was not under discussion. The ensuing discussion displayed the differences. Wibaut and his companions desired a physical office on the continent with a paid staff, accepting financial support from the hosting country. The bureau members envisioned a housing section only having a seat on the continent with an (unpaid) honorary officer running daily affairs, financially and materially independent from the hosting country. In an attempt to settle the differences, Unwin urged a resolution which acknowledged the general principles for the housing section provided by the bureau. To the horror of the attending bureau members, Wibaut answered by proposing a majority vote on the resolution, radically breaking with the culture of consensus-seeking that had governed the decision-making in the IFHTP for more than a decade. In the subsequent vote Unwin's recommendation was rejected. Seizing the opportunity, Wibaut urged to settle all remaining issues by majority voting as well. Thus Germany was chosen as host of the housing section and the draft standing orders were amended as Wibaut saw fit. These amendments included: (1) the appointment of a paid secretary, (2) the reimbursement of out of pocket expenses to members of the section and (3) the appointment of the staff of the housing section was to become an exclusive competence of the housing section itself.⁹ These amendments not violated the draft standing orders; they were in direct breach of the rules of the IFHTP.

Unsurprisingly, the executive committee refused to accept the amendments proposed by the housing section. Sympathizers of Wibaut tried to secure a paid secretary through another majority vote, but chairman Bruggeman had a card up his sleeve. He produced letters from members unable to attend, adhering to the views of the bureau. The executive committee decided to pass the matter of the standing orders back to the provisional committee of the housing section.¹⁰ However, this committee refused to reconsider its decisions on the standing orders and instead called for an extra meeting of the council at the 1928 Paris congress to solve the matter once and for all. Paris did not bring a *dénouement* of the conflict. Confronted with a controversy that was threatening to divide the members, the council thought it wiser to install a presidential committee to study the issue of the sections afresh. Wibaut and his followers did not want to await the outcome of this presidential committee and ostentatiously left the council meeting to discuss their next move. Obviously, this was not an *impromptu* move, but an action well planned in advance.¹¹ They decided to step outside the Federation and establish an independent housing organisation by themselves. The International Housing Association with its seat in Frankfurt, in primary sources often referred to as the *Frankfurt Verband* or simply the *Verband*, was formally launched in 1929.

The housing controversy

How could the euphoria of the Vienna amalgamation die away so soon and end in separation? Firsthand witness L.S.P. Scheffer afterwards blamed a different interpretation of the word 'secretariat' in England and on the continent as the immediate cause of the housing controversy. He concluded that the thinking and acting of the IFHTP had perhaps been "too much Anglo-Saxon-minded."¹² It is unlikely that a mere misunderstanding of the word secretariat was responsible for the schism, especially if we consider the high stakes at

play. Dissatisfaction with the Anglo-Saxon culture of the IFHTP must have been a factor to reckon. Although the British garden city militants had lost their absolute domination over the international body (see paragraph 3.2), the original Anglo-Saxon way of arranging things had persevered. Wibaut had never liked this culture, that was characterized by harmony, unanimity, neutrality and independence and a preference for strictly voluntary participation (no salaries or remunerations). He only saw deficits: lack of engagement, unprofessionalism, cumbersomeness, indecisiveness and generally poor and delayed preparations.¹³ He juxtaposed a continental way of resolving issues against the prevailing Anglo-Saxon culture. This continental culture of majority voting, dependence of governmental subventions and donations, and the retaining of a paid, professional staff was ingrained in continental rivals of the IFHTP, such as the UIV and the (late) IHC. The discussions about the formation of the housing section represented a direct confrontation between the harmonious British culture and the more terse continental culture.

Cultural differences certainly played their part, but the housing controversy went deeper. Both parties felt that their initial trust had been betrayed. According to French historian Saunier the contested autonomy was the crux of the conflict as both the leadership of the IFHTP and the representatives of the late IHC felt that their views on the position of the housing section had been part of their initial understanding. This dispute subsequently sparked other conflict lines: national civil servants versus elected officials, continentals versus Britons, socialists versus liberals, advocates of cottages versus tenement block supporters, defenders of free enterprise against militants of governmental intervention and disagreements between protagonists of different cultures of associative life. A very confusing situation developed “where even the fiercest antagonists struggled to find their way, and outsiders got lost.”¹⁴ Saunier’s conflict lines do call the fierce internal debates that shook the IHC in the early 1920s to mind, suggesting that the IFHTP drew in a Trojan horse by merging with the IHC.¹⁵ To the conflict lines identified by Saunier we can add the friction between housing studies as an independent specialisation versus housing as a part of the broader comprehensive planning discipline.¹⁶ Moreover, personal feuds that arose once individual members identified themselves or were identified by others with specific positions in the conflict lines played an important role as well.¹⁷

Saunier’s outline of the housing controversy into conflict lines helps us to grasp the profoundness of the conflict, but it also gives a false sense of a complete overview. At first sight the housing controversy was indeed a pitched battle between two camps: the leadership of the IFHTP and representatives of the late IHC. However, a closer look blurs this clear distinction of camps. A lot of the representatives of the IHC had already been (executive) members of the Federation before the merger. Moreover, not all former members of the IHC sided with Wibaut. For example, the representatives of the National Housing and Town Planning Council stuck to the Federation after Wibaut’s departure. The situation becomes even more complex if we observe the behaviour of French delegate Bruggeman. Bruggeman had been a prominent member of the IHC, but as a member of the bureau of the Federation he was actually one of the most outspoken adversaries of Wibaut’s views. Bruggeman also reveals that the housing controversy cannot be labelled as a continuation of the old struggle between a British leadership and discontent continental members, although the discontent continental housing reformers persistently tried to present it otherwise. Bruggeman had been one of the most outspoken continental members against British domination (see paragraph 3.2), but now he sided with the leadership of the

IFHTP. Although the provisional committee of the housing section and the *Verband* undeniably had a socialist signature – prominent social activists as Wibaut, Vinck and Sellier dominated the executive of the *Verband* - by no means all socialist members followed Wibaut and some of his sympathisers were not socialist at all. In fact, none of the identified conflict lines can be unambiguously translated as a conflict between the leadership of the Federation and the members that eventually would start the *Verband*, without making reservations.

More importantly, the outline of conflict lines does not adequately explain why the housing controversy arose. Surely, autonomy of the housing section was not an objective, but rather a means to an end. It is far more likely that (dormant) conflict lines sparked a thirst for autonomy, than the other way around. Why did these conflict lines ignite? The IFHTP had always united different views, that now suddenly are presented as conflict lines. Unwin actually thought that the representation of different ideas was the strength of the Federation.¹⁸ A conflict between the British leadership and continental members had manifested itself in the preceding years, but the contested internal power distribution was already changing (see paragraph 3.2). The real issue was that Wibaut and his followers wanted to exclusively propagate “housing reform largely carried out through the instrumentality of State and municipal agencies, or at very least with their very definite financial backing.”¹⁹ This effectively excluded all other housing ideas from the housing section. Assuming that their policy would never get the approval of the central leadership in London, Wibaut and his sympathizers pressed for an independent housing secretariat on the continent, so that they could have things their way without interference from London. The IFHTP did not have problems with the promotion of governmental intervention in housing matters, but the resolute rejection of other housing conceptions touched a sour spot. The IFHTP had successfully shook off its propagandistic outlook and transformed into an international study platform to appeal to a broad audience, so it must have been reluctant to resort to exclusive propaganda of a specific housing solution. On a more practical level, it had put a lot of effort in raising membership in the United States where there was no central government taking an active interest in housing. Moreover it offended the garden city workers who, although no longer in control over the international body, were still a force to be reckoned with.²⁰ They were perceptive to the advantages of governmental intervention, but the radical rejection of private initiative, the motor behind some of the leading garden city achievements, was unacceptable to them.

Alienation and overture

The separation of the dissatisfied housing reformers did not bring a foreclosure of the conflict. It evolved into a dispute on the relation between the *Verband* and the IFHTP and a demarcation of their working fields. This external debate prompted the question which of the two was the heir apparent of the IHC. The *Verband* considered itself the direct descendant, whereas the IFHTP persisted that the IHC had formally transferred its activities to the IFHTP. Moreover, the IFHTP considered its housing activities legitimate anyway. The post-war activities of the IHC were negligible, whereas the Federation had actively treated housing issues, if only as part of the broader town planning perspective. But the discussion was not entirely an external affair. Many followers of Wibaut had retained their membership of the Federation. The whole affair sowed a seed of discord among the members of the IFHTP, splitting them into factions: sympathizers and opponents of the *Verband* and a moderate faction anxiously avoiding choosing sides.

After the disastrous Paris meeting the IFHTP tried to repair the rift by offering membership to the *Verband*.²¹ However, the rogue housing reformers cherished their new-found independence and only wanted to collaborate if they were acknowledged as an equal partner. Undoubtedly, this confidence in their autonomy partly rested on the acknowledgement and support given by the International Labour Office in Geneva that never had wholeheartedly backed the fusion of the IHC and the IFHTP.²² Although its offer of membership was taunted, the IFHTP nevertheless was eager to reach an agreement with the *Verband*, if only to restore its internal peace. Thus it was easily agreed to arrange a meeting to discuss future relations.

This meeting took place on April 23rd 1930 at The Hague. Although the *Verband* wanted to use the meeting to set definite terms for collaboration, the IFHTP was not exactly forthcoming. It only wanted to explore the possibilities in an informal setting and therefore wanted to send a delegation without authority to make concessions.²³ Thus Hendriksen (Denmark), Elgood (England) and Schmidt (Germany) representing the IFHTP met with Hudig (Netherlands), Wibaut (Netherlands) and Hans Kampffmeyer (Germany) of the *Verband*. Because the *Verband* refused to consider reunion, the meeting focussed on methods of collaboration. Hudig proposed to demarcate the working spheres of both bodies, claiming purely housing matters for the *Verband* and handing town planning matters to the Federation. Naturally the IFHTP refused to agree to this division. The only thing the representatives could agree upon was to recommend the establishment of a standing committee with three representatives of each organisation that was to advise on collaboration for congresses. Because both organisations had planned a congress in Berlin for 1931, these Berlin congresses were to serve as the first practical collaboration. The collaboration for the Berlin venues did materialize, although the making of definite arrangements proved to be a tedious business.²⁴

The hesitant advances did little to relieve the internal tensions in the IFHTP. This is remarkable, the more if we take the ongoing organisational reform into account. If fear of a continued British domination was one of the considerations of the housing reformers, this fear seemed misplaced. The process of transformation into a more truly international organisation (see paragraph 3.2) was continued. After Howard's death in 1928 it was decided that future presidents were not allowed to hold their office for more than three consecutive years. Although for the time being the presidency remained in British hands - Unwin was chosen as the new president - the election of officers did create a path for the 'continentals' to the bureau: Unwin's prior position of honorary treasurer was filled by Robert Schmidt of the *Ruhrsiedlungsverband*. This was a significant change. Not only was Schmidt the first German to be appointed officer of the IFHTP - a clear indication that the relations with the Germans had finally normalized after World War I - but the appointment also changed the absolute power balance in the bureau. The 'continentals' now held three seats (Bruggeman, Sellier and Schmidt), whereas the British counterpart had only two seats (Purdom and Unwin; three seats if we also count Chapman, but the latter had no voting powers).²⁵ The following year it was resolved that half of the members of the executive committee was to retire each year, although with eligibility for re-election.²⁶

However, the really significant organisational changes that must have appealed to the *Verband* were first implemented in 1930.²⁷ Unwin presented proposals to increase the efficiency of the organisation. The most important recommendations were a more frequent

change of the honorary officers and an increase of their number. This must have been music to the *Verband's* ears, for it held the promise of a diminishing influence of the rigid members of the bureau. Chairman of the executive committee Bruggeman, one of the more outspoken opponents of the *Verband* in the bureau, resigned to make place for the more moderate Danish delegate Hendriksen, although some of Wibaut's followers feared that the Dane had been pushed forwards by the bureau so that it could continue to have things its way.²⁸ Another positive development was the nomination of Robert Schmidt, an outspoken advocate of reunion with the *Verband*, as Unwin's successor. However, he declined because he thought that he could be more valuable for the IFHTP as mediator for reunion. Instead American member John Nolen was elected as the next president at the 1931 congress in Berlin. One major consideration for this nomination was the fact that he had not actively chosen sides in the lingering conflict with the housing reformers.²⁹ And finally, somewhere in 1930 or 1931, Purdom stepped down due to health reasons, handing the post of honorary secretary to Pepler, another militant of reunion.³⁰

Despite the organisational changes, the tensions among the members of the IFHTP actually increased. By 1930 Unwin felt forced to address the ruined internal atmosphere and urged members to maintain "open dealing and frank speaking." He thought tensions had mainly arisen because active members had been divided in sympathy between the IFHTP and Wibaut's group.³¹ Although Unwin regarded the members of and sympathizers with the *Verband* as the main culprits responsible for the ruined internal atmosphere, the executive committee, and the bureau in particular, should also have looked in its own heart. Many of Wibaut's outspoken supporters fell prey to an internal witch-hunt. One exemplary case was the exclusion of Vinck. He had been unable to attend the 1929 Rome congress, but had expressed his availability for reappointment at the executive committee by letter. This letter supposedly 'never arrived' and subsequently he was not re-elected. The sympathisers of the *Verband* saw foul play in this case, for the incident was not isolated; Hudig intimated to Vinck that a similar situation had occurred to Otto and Kampffmeyer.³² The sympathisers of the *Verband* were affronted by the attempts of silencing them up and some of them, including Hudig (Netherlands), Schwan (Germany), Sjöstrand (Sweden) and Harris (UK) seriously considered cancelling their membership.³³

Agreement in sight

Shortly after the Berlin congresses in the summer of 1931 an informal committee was constituted by the presidents of the IFHTP and the *Verband* to smooth the way towards a better relation between the two organisations. This committee had complete freedom to work out a satisfactory solution to the lingering controversy, be it complete amalgamation or other forms of collaboration. The committee felt the continuation of two separate bodies could only be justified by fundamental differences. The fact that many delegates in Berlin had expressed their surprise that the two organisations had organized independent congresses, proved that the situation of continued separation was confusing and illogic. The informal committee saw no fundamental differences – and if it did, it chose to ignore them – and concluded that a merger was the righteous path. It proposed to constitute a new organisation with two secretariats, one in Britain and one on the continent, and a general director in control, possibly located at a third location. This proposal was dismissed by the executive committee of the IFHTP as cumbersome, needlessly expensive and inefficient. Nevertheless, the executive committee was more than willing to constitute a joint-committee with the *Verband* to draft proper proposals for amalgamation.³⁴

Why was a complete merger suddenly negotiable? Less than a year ago the *Verband* had insisted on its independence. The surviving minutes of the executive of the *Verband* do not adequately explain this sudden change of mind, but if we consider its situation, it is not hard to come up with plausible explanations. The International Labour Office that had proven to be an important supporter of the *Verband* had lost interest in the housing question and subsequently support from Geneva gradually dried up.³⁵ More importantly, the political constellation in Germany changed dramatically. Germany was also hit by the Great Depression. By 1930 the German economy was beset by mass unemployment and widespread business failures. Suddenly Hitler's message, blaming the crisis on the Jewish financiers and Bolsheviks, struck a sensitive cord among the German electorate. In September 1930 Hitler's NSDAP booked a huge electoral victory, becoming Germany's second-largest political party. Boosted by this victory, the street terror by the *Sturmabteilung* (SA), the militia of the NSDAP, aimed at Jewish civilians and leftwing political activists rapidly increased.³⁶ The *Verband* must have questioned itself whether a departure from Germany, even if it meant a reunion with the IFHTP, was not to be preferred.

In 1932 things took a turn for the worse. Hans Kampffmeyer, the secretary of the *Verband*, suddenly passed away. The powers of Paula Schäfer, the personal assistant of Kampffmeyer, were temporarily expanded, but to sustain continuity a suitable replacement for Kampffmeyer had to be found. More alarming were the municipal elections of 1933 which brought a huge victory for the Nazi party.³⁷ Frankfurt used to be a socialist stronghold, but the new Nazi magistrate had little in common with the *Verband*, distrusting it as a socialist hotbed. Financial support was withdrawn and the *Verband* was given notice for the provided accommodation, forcing the *Verband* to contemplate a departure from Frankfurt.³⁸ If there were still reserves towards a possible merger with the IFHTP, we can be sure that a fusion rapidly became more attractive as the years 1932-1933 progressed.

But the Germans were not planning to let the *Verband* go that easily. In 1933 Hitler's NSDAP seized control. All other political parties were banned and the Nazi party and German state gradually fused. One of the manifestations of this *Gleichschaltung* in the working sphere of the *Verband* was the constitution of the *Deutscher Gemeindetag* (1933-1945), a central organisation controlled by the Nazi's that united all communal bodies on a compulsory basis.³⁹ Through Berlin mayor Treff the *Gemeindetag* claimed the housing secretariat for Germany. This stance was sanctified by direct orders of *Reichsminister* Joseph Goebbels. If the *Gemeindetag* were given time to clear the air, Treff was convinced that a satisfactory arrangement could be made with the city of Frankfurt. So Wibaut could do little more than postpone a decision on the matter until the next meeting of the executive of the *Verband*.⁴⁰

Unsurprisingly, Frankfurt was coerced to renew its support by the next meeting. Still, most non-German members preferred a move to another country as they openly questioned whether "one is in a position to move quite freely and unmolested in the Germany of today" and Treff was asked if he was aware of "the fact that the seat of an international association in Germany is today to be disputed and disputable."⁴¹ A removal was only considered a temporary measure; by now all members agreed that a reunion with the IFHTP was the only just path. But the Germans did not go along. Germany would interpret the removal of the housing secretariat from Frankfurt as an "unfriendly action." As the offer from Frankfurt was the only solid offer available, Treff strongly urged accepting it. Moreover, he demanded more influence of the *Gemeindetag*. This body was to be called upon in all questions

concerning housing in Germany – effectively severing all ties between the *Verband* and leftwing housing reformers in Germany- and it was to be given a vice-president in the *Verband* in the person of Kurt Jeserich. Concerning the ongoing negotiations with the IFHTP, Treff offered to use the growing influence of the *Gemeindetag*, an offer that was not to be refused.⁴² The *Verband* could do nothing but give in. Effectively, the *Verband* was taken hostage by the Nazi's. These kidnappers only favoured a fusion with the IFHTP on German terms. Basically, the Nazis wanted control over the new amalgamated body. To strengthen its negotiation position, the *Gemeindetag* urged German local authorities not to join the IFHTP, but to affiliate themselves to the *Verband*.⁴³

As soon as the report of the informal presidential committee was presented in December 1931, the newly installed joint-committee quickly set to work to draft terms for amalgamation. This committee produced a report, including draft rules by December 1932. Officially signed by five members, it seems that Hudig (NL; representing the *Verband*) and Pepler (UK; representing the IFHTP) were the prime architects of the report. The unworkable proposal of two secretariats was now traded in for one central secretariat, although the exact location of this secretariat was anxiously avoided. Generally, the draft rules echoed the rules of the Federation, although alterations had been made to meet the demands of the *Verband*. The honorary officers were to be abolished and replaced by a general manager. Additionally, the bureau was to be enlarged and given the character of an inner executive. The executive committee was to be enlarged from 24 to 36 members. The safeguards against chance of majority decisions by unrepresentative meetings (the set quora) were to be dropped and public organisations – the majority of members of the *Verband* - were to be given representation in proportion to the amount of their subscription.⁴⁴ There was one hidden sting. Hudig and Pepler wanted to get rid of Chapman, one of the last relics of the heydays of British domination and an outspoken opponent of the Frankfurt housing reformers. Pepler thought it better “not to specify the qualifications of the new General Secretary (...) If we could call this person a ‘General Manager’ it might considerably soften the blow for Chapman and his friends.”⁴⁵

The 1932 report was well received. A reunion finally looked within reach. However, soon new irritations rose. The report had urged to step on the accelerator in coming to a final fusion, considering the difficult position of the Frankfurt organisation. Although the *Verband* accepted the report in principal in December 1932, the IFHTP tarried, mainly due to sickness of its secretary and consensus-seeking by correspondence. It only managed to arrange a meeting of its executive committee in late April 1933 to discuss the report.⁴⁶ Although a majority actually favoured a reunion, the IFHTP nevertheless refused to make a final decision, because Wibaut had publicly expressed reservations concerning the location of the secretariat and the person of the general manager.⁴⁷ Despite Pepler's repeated call to unambiguously revoke these reservations, Wibaut did not produce a straightforward answer.⁴⁸ The IFHTP interpreted Wibaut's ambiguous stance as another example of his tactless diplomacy, but it is debatable whether this interpretation was entirely correct. His ambiguity might well have been instigated by a German pressure behind the curtains aimed at preserving the secretariat and general manager for Germany or at least a pro-German country. The *Verband* on its part interpreted the postponement of a final decision as deliberate stalling.⁴⁹ Only in September 1933 the Federation presented its decision. It had decided not to accept the report.⁵⁰ The *Verband* was furious. Not only was the decision taken unreasonably late, but the *Verband* also thought it rested on improper considerations,

namely the supposed 'German' and 'social-democrat' character of the *Verband*.⁵¹ The *Verband* was fed up with the attitude of the IFHTP and cancelled the negotiations.⁵²

Reunion at last

Although official advances had been terminated, behind the stage the *Verband* continued to plot a reunion. The UIV was called upon to act as a neutral intermediary.⁵³ But was the Union really neutral? Leading members of the executive of the *Verband* (Wibaut, Vinck, Sellier, Klöti) held similar positions in the International Union. Moreover, some active (British) members of the IFHTP regarded the envious International Union as the main instigator behind the housing controversy.⁵⁴ The IFHTP must have seen through this transparent attempt to reopen negotiations and was reluctant to accept. However, there was no need to consider the offer of the International Union: Bruggeman had run into Kurt Jeserich, president of the *Deutsche Gemeindetag* and vice-president of the *Verband*, and the two had sat down to discuss the present difficulties. Both men had agreed that a rejoining of the international organisations was inevitable and thought another meeting to discuss the issue afresh would be a proper start. Eager to restart the negotiations without involving the UIV, Bruggeman's initiative was officially recorded in the minutes as a proposal on behalf of the IFHTP to resume the talks with the *Verband*.⁵⁵ Unsurprisingly, Frankfurt reacted positive. As a token of goodwill, the *Verband* invited the IFHTP to collaborate on its planned 1937 congress in Paris and make it a joint venture.⁵⁶

Representatives of both organisations met on May 9th and 10th, 1936. The IFHTP was represented by Pepler and Niemeyer, the latter replacing the sick Bruggeman, and the *Verband* was represented by Sellier and Vinck, Sellier replacing the deceased Wibaut. Contrary to previous agreements, the *Deutscher Gemeindetag* sent Goecke to the negotiations, so that it could have a direct influence on the outcome. The gentlemen agreed to focus on the proposed joint-congress, feeling that an agreement on this practical collaboration would bring the two bodies closer together. Pepler stated that the IFHTP would collaborate, provided that the French hosts would provide financial security. Once this was settled a new Joint Committee would be installed to make definite arrangements for the congress and draft conditions for reunion. There was a minor uproar as Sellier only wanted to provide the desired security if the Federation beforehand agreed to a fusion of the two organisations as the outcome of the congress, which the Federation of course refused, but for the rest the negotiations went smoothly.⁵⁷

Thus the joint congress committee met on June 19th 1937 to settle the terms for amalgamation. The party included Bruggeman (France), Pepler (UK), Scheffer (Netherlands) and Verwilghen (Belgium) representing the IFHTP and Jeserich (Germany) and Vinck (Belgium) representing the *Verband*, plus the secretaries of both bodies. It was decided to adhere to the rules of the IFHTP and make some amendments to meet the wishes of the *Verband*. The most important change was the rejection of honorary officers. In future the Bureau, acting as an inner executive, was to comprise the president and three vice-presidents of which one acted as treasurer. The president was also to act as chairman of the executive committee. The issue of the location of the central secretariat largely remained unsolved. As Germany was out of the question, the *Verband* objected to France and England, arguing that if the *Verband* was to make a sacrifice, so should the Federation. It was finally agreed that the secretariat should find accommodation at another European country. Jeserich urged to appoint Strölin, mayor of Stuttgart and rising star in the NSDAP, as the first

president of the fused body but he met blank unwillingness and as a compromise it was decided to nominate Christian Gierløff (Norway) as first president, to be succeeded by Strölin in 1938.⁵⁸

Subsequently, the agreed terms for fusion were successfully shepherded through the meetings of the bodies of the IFHTP. Gierløff in vain tried to undermine the agreement by questioning the departure of the secretariat from London, an attempt that would cost him the presidency. Just before a general meeting of both organisations would hold a final vote on the merger, the executives of both organisations assembled to discuss the progress. Vinck stated that the *Verband* would accept the terms, provided that Pepler, not Gierløff, would become the first president of the fused body. Because it was not feasible to nominate a *Verband* member for presidency, Vinck had nominated somebody who had always favoured collaboration with Frankfurt, rather than accept Gierløff who was a confessed sympathizer of the old honorary officers. Gierløff was deliberately absent because he expected his nomination for presidency to be agreed upon, so Vinck's new condition was easily met. After the meeting of both executives, the general assembly of all the members of both organisations unanimously embraced a fusion with Pepler as first president.⁵⁹

From housing controversy to political controversy

If we analyse the continuation of the housing controversy in the 1930s we cannot but wonder whether the conflict was about the position of housing at all. In fact, both the *Verband* and the IFHTP largely seemed to have forgotten what the housing controversy was about, or at the very least anxiously ignored the motives leading to the schism. The *Verband* did not want to discuss the motives of their departure and, although a small, but stubborn faction in the IFHTP demanded an acknowledgement of the *Verband* that it had been wrong in leaving the IFHTP or even some form of apology, the IFHTP largely chose to bury the past and concentrate on the future. Thus both parties were fiercely quarrelling over (organisational) terms for reunion. Both wanted to get the upper hand in the new amalgamated body and were reluctant to make concessions that could be interpreted as loss of face. The negotiations were greatly hampered by the fact that the dispute between the *Verband* and the IFHTP got politicized. The *Verband* was accused of being exclusively social-democratic and pro-German. The latter qualification became pre-dominant as the Nazis seized control over the *Verband* and wanted to use the negotiations with the IFHTP to expand their grip on the Urban Internationale. Nevertheless, the vision of a united body held an irresistible appeal, so negotiations continued. After years of quarrelling finally a compromise was worked out that reconciled the wishes of the *Verband* and the IFHTP. But it was also clearly a compromise between German members and members that opposed Nazi ideology: Germany was denied the central secretariat and the position of the first president of the fused body, but it did secure the concession that prominent Nazi Karl Strölin would succeed the first president in 1938. As with all compromises, it was carried by a majority – undoubtedly hoping the German pressure could be held off – but a minority fiercely opposed it. Afterwards in his memoirs Purdom bitterly remarked: "the Germans secured control, removed the central office to Brussels, but allowed the British to hold presidential and other positions, with which they were satisfied."⁶⁰

4.3 Membership re-arranged

The housing controversy that colored the organizational course of the Federation in the period 1926-1937 was primarily a conflict between members and after the establishment of



[ii]



[iii]

Prominent active members in the period 1926-1937: [i] Thomas Adams (1871-1940) of the American City Planning Institute, [ii] Otokar Fierlinger (1888-1941), [iii] Sverre Pedersen (1882-1971) from Norway, representing the *Norges Tekniske Høgskole* and [iv] Emil Klöti, representing the municipality of Zürich (1877-1963).

[iv]



[v]



the *Verband* a conflict between members and former members. The conflict originated in the influx of new members from the IHC. Leading activists among these newcomers, headed by the charismatic Amsterdam alderman Wibaut, demanded profound organizational changes to meet a specific agenda of housing reform. Rather than to get sidetracked in a culture of endless talks and compromises to reach unanimity, the dissatisfied newcomers sought a direct confrontation to have things their way. They incited various discontent factions in the IFHTP to join their revolt. The coup resulted in a division of membership between sympathizers and opponents of Wibaut's views and moderates anxiously upholding a neutral stance in between. The coup ended in a schism that was only breached after the better part of a decade of quarrels and reconciliations. To truly grasp the rise and foreclosure of the housing controversy, it is essential to take the consequences to and reactions of the membership into account. How did the housing controversy affect the membership of the Federation and what measures were taken to counteract or adapt to the consequences? What changes in membership facilitated the eventual allaying of the controversy?

4.3.1 Old hands and newcomers

Also for the period 1926-1937 surviving membership documentation is scarce and incomplete. However, also for this period we have surviving minutes of the meetings of the internal bodies of the IFHTP at our disposal that enable us to identify the relatively small population of active members that defined the performance of the IFHTP.⁶¹ The use of these surviving minutes is not without danger. Firstly, their frequency and attendance declined significantly in the period 1926-1937 and they do not reveal what happened in the intervals between meetings. Secondly, the minutes are incomplete and sporadically documented, undoubtedly reflecting the long illnesses of the secretaries Purdom and Chapman. Still, they are the best available sources and they can be of use to track the changes of membership. For the developments in the intervals between meetings, we can use surviving archives of members and, to some extent, the official reports of the congresses and reports in periodicals. Of course these sources also serve to verify the information found in the surviving minutes.

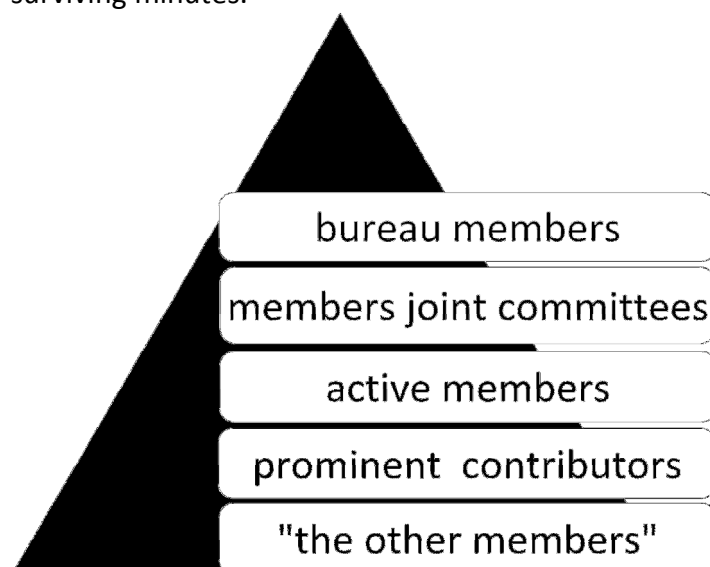


Figure 4.1 Hierarchy of IFHTP membership in the period

Bureau

If we again order membership according to influence, we can construct a pyramidal model similar to the one introduced in the previous chapter (figure 4.1). At the top of this model are the honorary officers, also known as the bureau. The bureau ran the daily business of the IFHTP, was member of the executive committee and was represented in all internal committees and joint-committees with the *Verband*. It was common practice to give the bureau first say on all important issues. The approval of the stance of the bureau by the bodies with formal decision competences usually was just a formality. Unlike the early 1920s, the bureau no longer was an extension of the British Garden Cities and Town planning Association (figure 4.2). Purdom and Chapman were the last remaining garden city adepts. Although generally sympathizing with the garden city idea, the other British members had other loyalties. Old hand Unwin more acted as a representative of the Town Planning Institute, as did newcomer Pepler. The other newcomer, Astor, was a representative of the National Housing and Town Planning Council. Clearly the British still retained a majority in the bureau, although their hold rapidly dwindled in the late 1920s as other nationalities (Germany, Denmark, the United States and Norway) entered the Bureau. The secretaries still wielded much influence, but the days of a free rein had past. The long illnesses of the secretaries loosened their hold on daily affairs. More importantly, the other honorary officers, above all Bruggeman, took a more active interest in the daily affairs. Under Unwin the character of the president changed from symbolic father to central manager. If we consider the members of the bureau, it is evident that sympathizers of the *Verband* were barred; we miss prominent members such as Harris, Sellier and Vinck. Initially, the Bureau included notorious opponents of Wibaut's views (Bruggeman, Purdom and Chapman), but these hostile elements were gradually replaced, although Purdom did briefly return as acting treasurer.

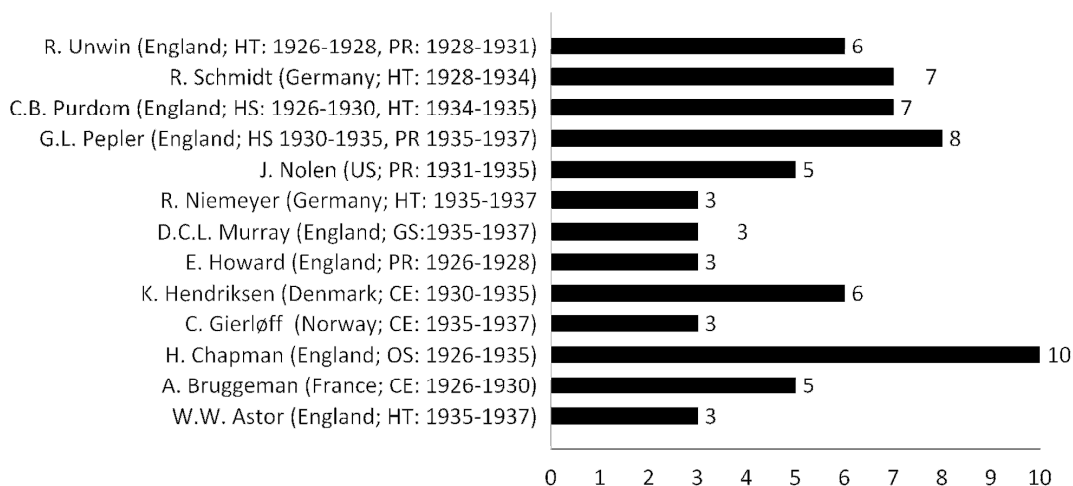


Figure 4.2 Continuity in the bureau of the IFHTP – president (PR), honorary treasurer (HT), organising secretary (OS), general secretary (GS), honorary secretary (HS), chairman of the executive committee (CE) – in 1926-1937, measured in years holding office. (source: IFHP jubilee congress report 1963, 97)

Joint committees

The next zone in our pyramid is reserved for the (active) members of the joint-committees with the *Verband* (figure 4.1). The representation of the IFHTP in these committees was constituted by members of the bureau and members of the executive committee (figure 4.3a) and in terms of influence served as the link between these two internal bodies. It is

almost needless to say that the joint-committees first came into being after the separation of the dissatisfied housing reformers. The first joint-committees had very little real power and basically only served as an informant of the executive. The earliest representatives of the IFHTP were Hendriksen (Denmark), Elgood (England) and Schmidt (Germany). After the first informal talks, the influence of the joint-committees rapidly increased. Prominent officers such as Unwin and Purdom joined the joint committees to partake in the negotiations. With the joining of prominent officers, the authority to make concessions increased.

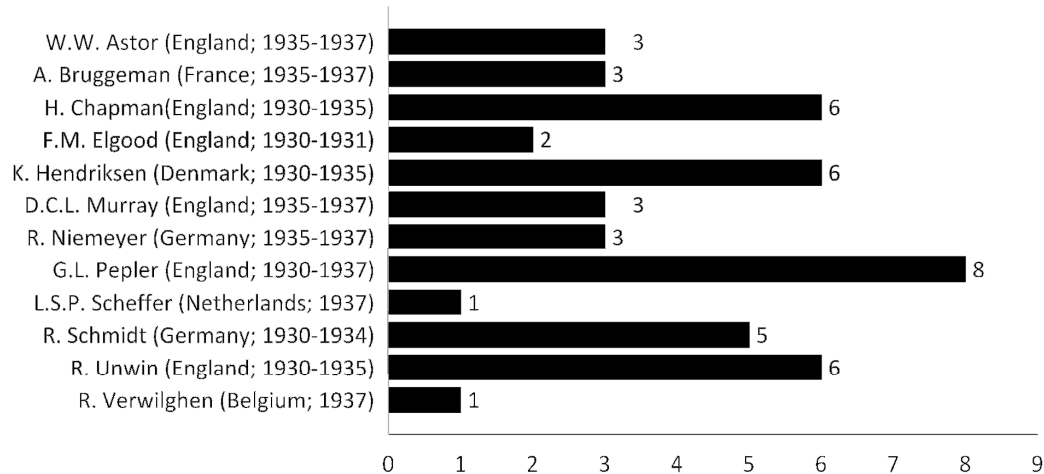


Figure 4.3a Continuity in IFHTP representation in the joint-committees 1930-1937, expressed in years holding seat (source: minutes of the IFHTP and the *Verband*, located respectively at IFHP-Archives and Wibaut-Archives, no 345).

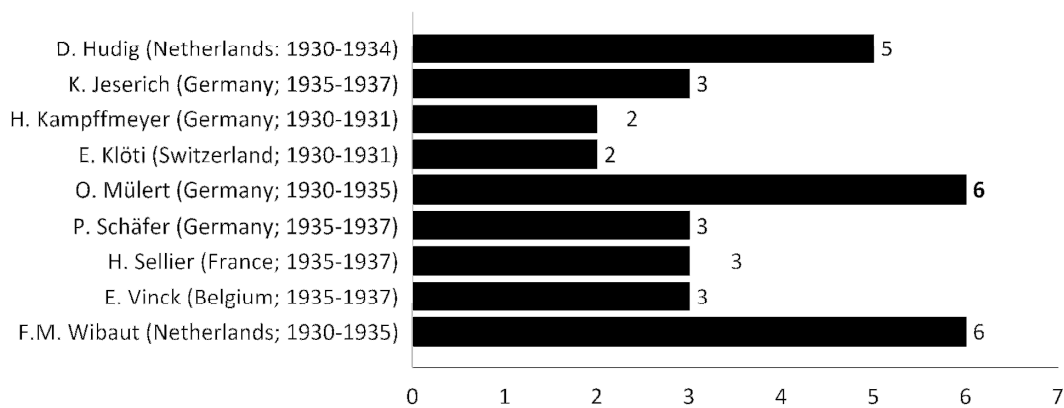


Figure 4.3b Continuity in *Verband* representation in the joint committees Membership of the joint-committees 1930-1937, expressed in years holding a seat (sources: minutes of the IFHTP and *Verband*, located respectively at IFHP-Archives and Wibaut-Archives, no 345)

But we must not overlook the representation of the *Verband* in the joint committees which included several members that were or had been members of the IFHTP (figure 4.3b). Apart from Oskar Mülert, all the *Verband*-men had a connection with the IFHTP. Wibaut's explosive entry and departure in the Federation has already been discussed. Hudig, Sellier and Vinck of course were old hands of the Federation. Throughout the conflict, Hudig and Vinck remained active members of the Federation; Sellier left the Federation in 1930. Hudig was arguably the most important link between the Federation and the *Verband*. He was a member of the executive of both bodies until his death in 1934. His role as bridge-builder between the two quarrelling organisations cannot be stressed enough. Jeserich was not an

active member of the IFHTP but of course he did have connections with it as General Secretary of the *Deutscher Gemeindetag*.

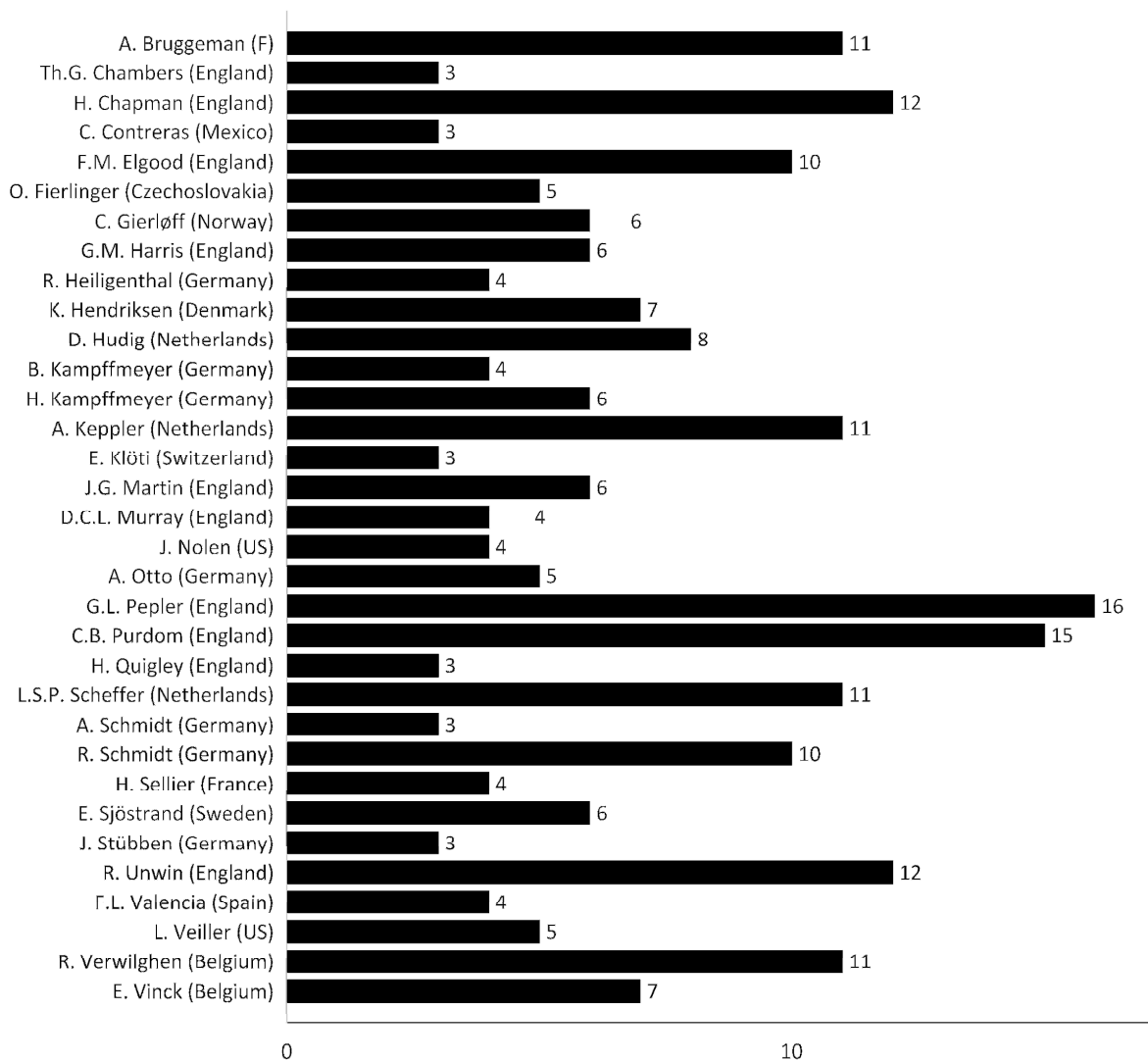


Figure 4.4 Continuity in individual active IFHTP membership in the period 1926-1937 expressed in attended meetings of internal bodies. Minimal attendance is 3 meetings (minutes of the Executive Committee and Council 1926-1937, located at IFHP-Archives).

Executive committee and council

The next level in our pyramid (figure 4.1) is occupied by the active members that attended the meetings of the executive committee and the council, that formally decided upon the course of the Federation. The importance of attendance of these meetings decreased in the early 1930s, as the frequency and attendance of these meetings dropped and the IFHTP was forced to resort to votes by correspondence to settle pressing matters. Still, attendance was the best means for members not represented in the bureau or joint-committees to make their voice heard. Figure 4.4 clearly reveals that we are still dealing with a relatively small population of active members. Moreover, if we compare it to figure 3.4 of the previous period, it becomes apparent that we roughly are dealing with the same members. For their background I refer to paragraph 3.3.

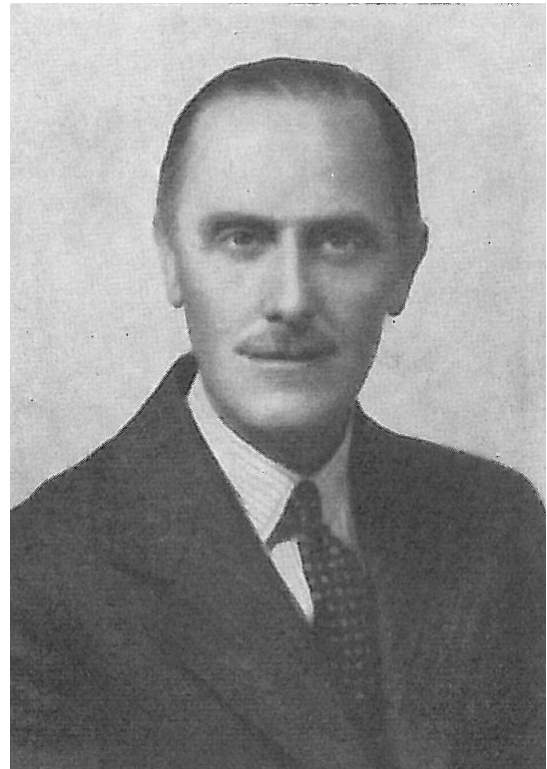
There are, however, some new entrees in the list of active members. Mexican planner Carlos Contreras was the first member not originating from Europe or Northern America to join the active members. Apart from the entry of Contreras, especially the newcomers among the British delegation attract the attention. Englishman Donald Murray, former assistant secretary of the Council for Preservation of Rural England (CPRE), was contracted in 1935 to replace Chapman. Elgood, Martin and Quigley were representatives of the National Housing and Town Planning Council (NHTPC). In the early days the NHTPC had been a loyal supporter, but once the regional planning theme had pushed the housing question to the background, it had gradually lost interest in the IFHTP. It prominently returned after with the merger with the IHC, and this time it remained, despite the following housing controversy and separation of the *Verband*. It is remarkable that the GCTPA did not provide new active members, so its influence in the IFHTP evaporated. In fact, the British garden city movement rapidly lost interest in the IFHTP as the garden city concept faded into the background. The congresses no longer received elaborate coverage in *Garden Cities and Town Planning*. The British garden city movement increasingly got into its shell, stubbornly continuing the praise of its cherished Welwyn and Letchworth experiments that, although generally acknowledged as pioneering town planning examples, no longer were regarded as daring representatives of the latest town planning fashions.

Opposed to the new arrivals in the list of active members, there are also remarkable departures. Some individual members cancelled their membership. For example Gustav Langen, one of the leading members behind the introduction of regional planning, left in the late 1920s. Perhaps he resented the fact that not he, but his biggest German rival Robert Schmidt made his way to the bureau, or perhaps he grew tired of the IFHTP as it no longer wholeheartedly pursued the constitution of a regional planning discipline, but instead opted for a half-baked course between a supervisory (regional) town planning profession and an independent housing profession (see paragraph 4.5). However, most departures do not originate in cancellations of membership, but are caused by the faltering frequency of congresses in the early 1930s. Active members that used to only attend the congresses, for example the American delegates C.S. Stein and H. Wright, continued to do so, but they do not reach the minimum attendance of figure 4.4.

Apart from arrivals and departures, the ranking of active members has changed significantly. To some extent, these shifts are caused by regular occurrences such as the death or resignation of members – for example the death of Hudig in 1934 and Chapman's resignation 'due to his health' in 1935. Another explanation can be found in the decrease of number of congresses, causing active members only attending the meetings at the congresses falling in the ranking. Still, these causes do not adequately explain the dramatic changes in the ranking of active membership. A closer look at the patterns of attendance of active membership learns that shifts in the ranking did not occur gradually, but are centred around 1930, immediately after the establishment of the *Verband* (figures 4.5a and 4.5b). It were primarily the open sympathisers with the *Verband* that disappeared among the active members. Vinck, Otto and Kampffmeyer fell prey to a witch-hunt initiated by the Bureau aimed at expelling supporters of the *Verband* from positions of power. This instigated some remaining supporters of the *Verband* to throw in the towel (for example Sellier, who left in 1930), while others felt forced to continue their presence under a low profile (for example Sjöstrand and Harris). Only very few *Verband*-men were able to hold on to their positions and actively participate in the policy-making. Basically, we are talking about two persons



[vi]



[vii]

Prominent active IFHTP members in the period 1926-1937: [v] Christian Gierløff of the Norsk Forening av Boligreformer (1879-1962), [vi] general secretary Donald Murray (1880-1938), [vii] Hermann Joseph Stübgen, representing the German Association of Architects and Engineers (1845-1936; vii) and [viii] Patrick Abercrombie (1879-1957) of the British Town Planning Institute

[viii]



[ix]



here, both of Dutch origin: Dirk Hudig and Arie Keppler. These two Dutchmen played a vital role behind the scenes in making arrangements for reconciliation between the two bodies. Initially the purging of the active members intensified the bad blood between the supporters and opponents of the *Verband*, but in the long run it nevertheless had some positive effects. To a certain extent it gave the controversy a more external character; at least it was successful in excluding headlong confrontations during the meetings of the bodies of the IFHTP. The void left by the absence of the prominent supporters was filled by moderate active members that paved the way for a settlement.

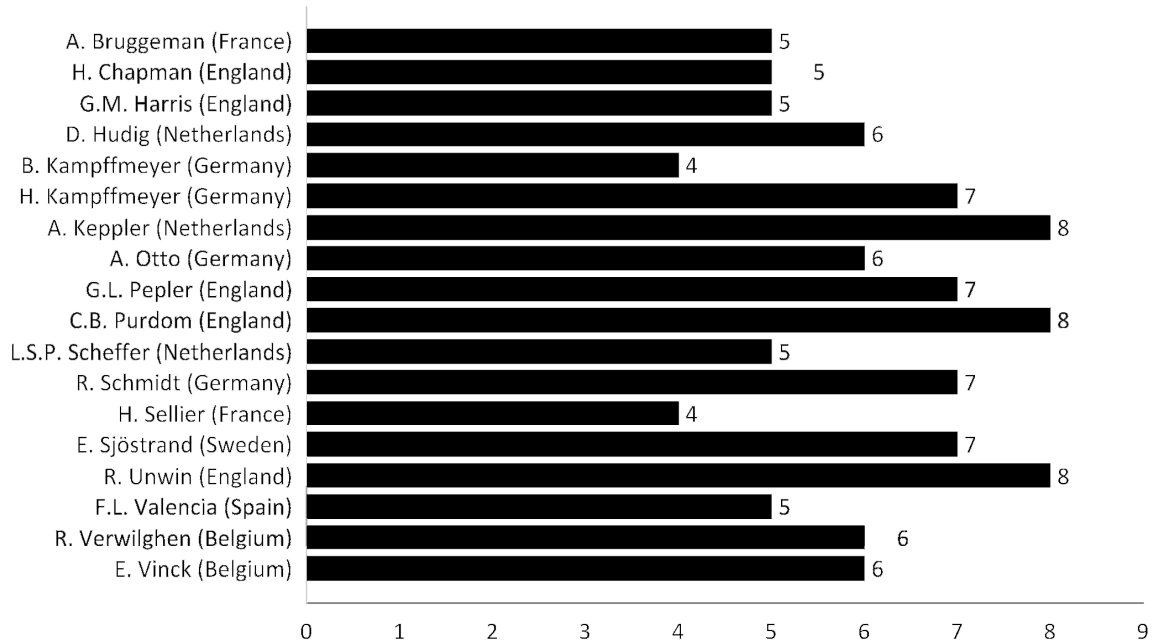


Figure 4.5a Number of attended meetings for individual active members (minimal attendance is 4 meetings; source: surviving minutes of the Executive Committee and Council 1926-1929, located at IFHP-Archives).

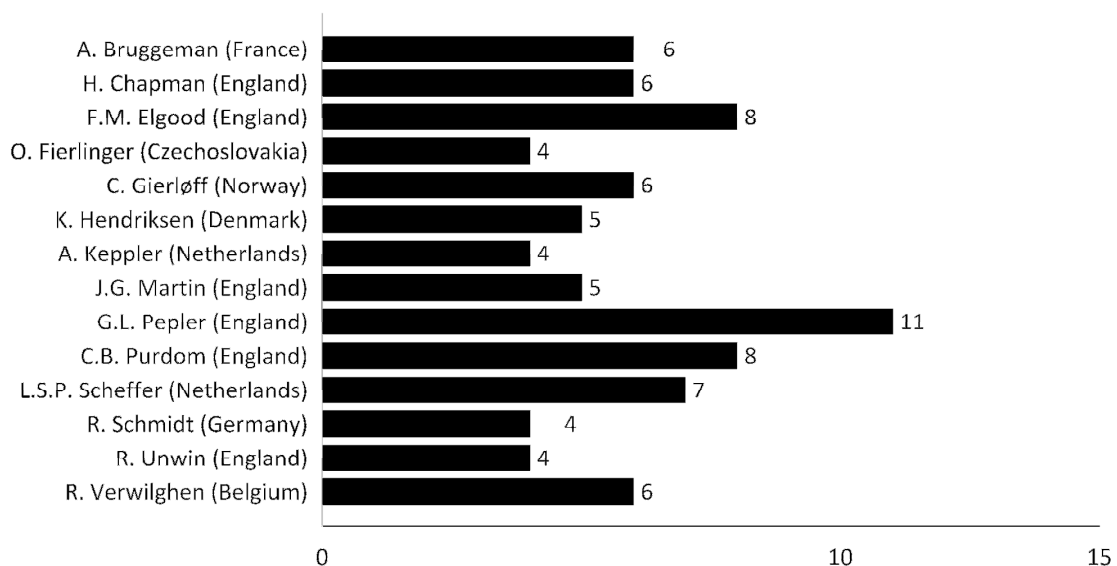


Figure 4.5b Number of attended meetings for individual active members (minimal attendance is 4 meetings; source: surviving minutes of the Executive Committee and Council 1930-1937, located at IFHP-Archives).

The basis of our pyramid (figure 4.1) is composed of individuals that contributed to the activities of the IFHTP – national reporters and session chairmen at the congresses,

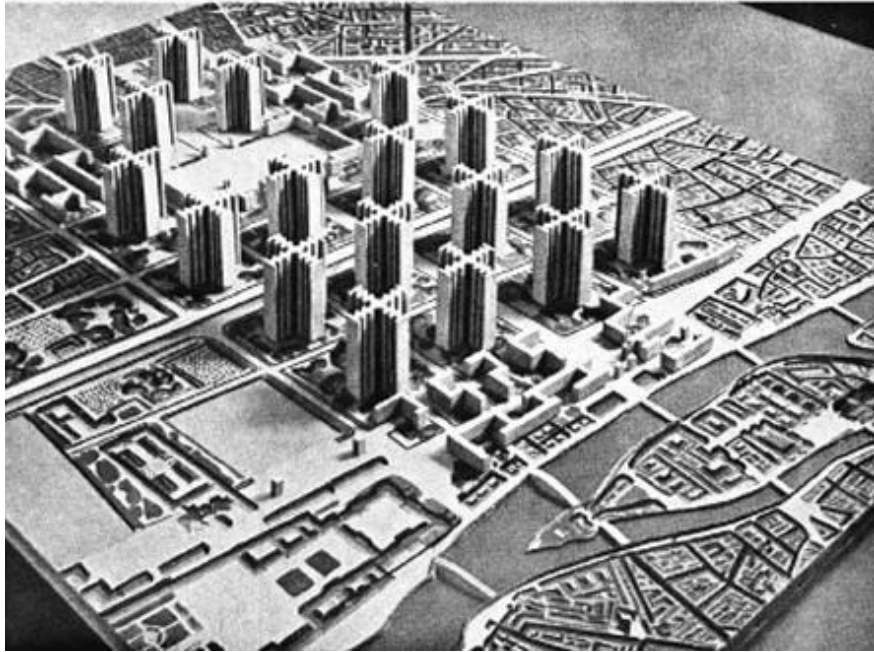
contributors to the periodical and participants in the committee work, apart from the joint committees (first and foremost the technical committee) – and the anonymous masses that passively participated in the IFHTP.

4.3.2 Marginal centrality

The congresses of the IFHTP still attracted international audiences of about 1,000 delegates (see figure 4.6) and thus remained an ideal occasion to maintain and expand social networks and plug into the transnational trade of housing and town planning practice and theory. But the IFHTP by no means was the sole facilitator. The departed housing reformers formed the *Verband* that held two conferences (Berlin 1931 and Prague 1935) before returning to the IFHTP at the Paris congress of 1937. The UIV had firmly re-established itself and quickly turned into the main international competitor of the IFHTP. There were newcomers in the Urban Internationale as well: the *Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne* (CIAM) and the *Association Internationale des Cités Linéaires* (AICL), both established in 1928. These newcomers offered a platform for more radical conceptions of town planning to achieve social reform, a radicalism that the IFHTP had lost along its way in the 1920s by focussing on practical solutions in the hope of seeing its views endorsed. However, the newcomers organised international conferences on a far modest scale than those of the IFHTP, and therefore not really posed competition for the IFHTP. Finally, there was still the International Labour Office (ILO) in Geneva that continued to focus on the housing question in the second part of the 1920s, although in the 1930s it lost interest in housing and pursued other issues instead.

IFHTP Congresses			
Year & City	Delegates	Year & City	Delegates
London, 1920	150	Paris, 1928	1,200
London, 1922	170	Rome, 1929	1,500
Paris, 1922	unknown	Berlin, 1931	1,000
Gothenburg, 1923	300	London, 1935	931
Amsterdam, 1924	400	Paris, 1937	1,000
New York, 1925	500	Mexico city, 1938	unknown
Vienna, 1926	1,000	Stockholm, 1939	1,000

Figure 4.6 Registered delegates for IFHTP congresses 1920-1939 (sources: conference reports, reports in GC&TP, Journal of TPI and TVS).⁶²



[x]

The CIAM and the Association Internationale des Cités Linéaires (AICL) entered the Urban Internationale in 1928: [ix]the famous Plan Voisin (1925) of CIAM coryphée Le Corbusier, proposing a dramatic reconstruction of the centre of Paris and [x] a schematic representation of the linear city by Arturo Soria y Mata (circa 19130 [x].

[xi]



6. Nueva Modello für das Stadtbau, 1913, S. 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100



Figure 4.7a Formal contacts in Urban Internationale circa 1928 (sources: Minutes IFHTP; reports AICL and correspondence ILO in ILO-Archives; UIV-minutes in Wibaut-Archives).

Figure 4.7b Formal contacts in Urban Internationale circa 1933 (sources: Minutes IFHTP; reports AICL and correspondence ILO in ILO-Archives; *Verband*-minutes in Wibaut-Archives).

These exponents of the Urban Internationale were not isolated; there was substantial trafficking between these organisations. As the *Verband* was established by discontent members of the IFHTP it hardly comes as a surprise that the two were bound together by personal networks. These networks were maintained and intensified by the negotiations between the two bodies, collaboration in joint-congresses, personal contacts between individual members and, although the bureau of the IFHTP tried to prevent it, substantial cross-membership in the executives and councils of both organisations. The connections of active members with the UIV that was pointed out in the previous chapter (see 3.1.2) continued, although cross-membership with this organisation was concentrated with the active members that left in 1928 to establish the *Verband* in Frankfurt. The AICL was very successful in attracting continental garden city enthusiasts of the earliest hour, so substantial cross-membership with the IFHTP was inevitable.⁶³ Some prominent CIAM-members, most notably Ernst May and Raphaël Verwilghen, did attend congresses of the IFHTP. Moreover, May was affiliated to the *Verband*. The ILO had official contact with all the other organisations and especially closely collaborated with the UIV and the *Verband* before leaving the international housing arena in the 1930s.⁶⁴ Clearly, most active members of the IFHTP already knew each other through their networks outside the IFHTP, i.e. participation in other international organisations. Although the bureau of the IFHTP hardly had a grip on these networks, they played an important role for the policy-making of the IFHTP. The centrality of the bureau in these networks was marginal. Active members, when meeting on other occasions than the meetings of the IFHTP, must have discussed the precarious situation between the *Verband* and the IFHTP and decided on a mutual course of action.

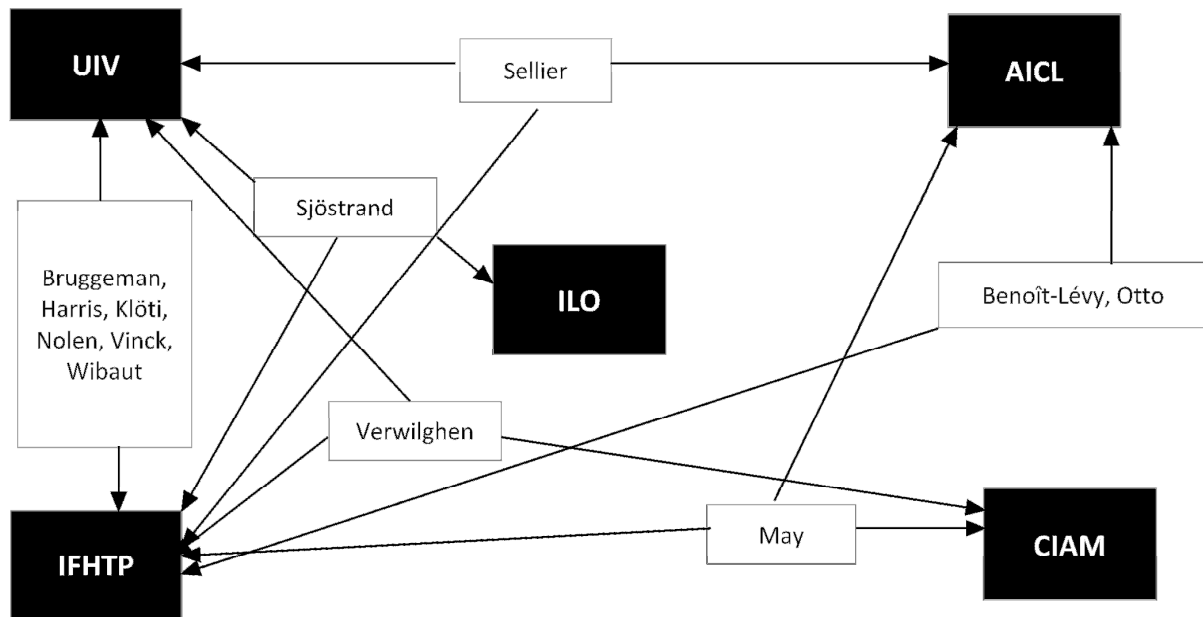


Figure 4.8a Cross-membership of prominent participants in the Urban Internationale circa 1928.

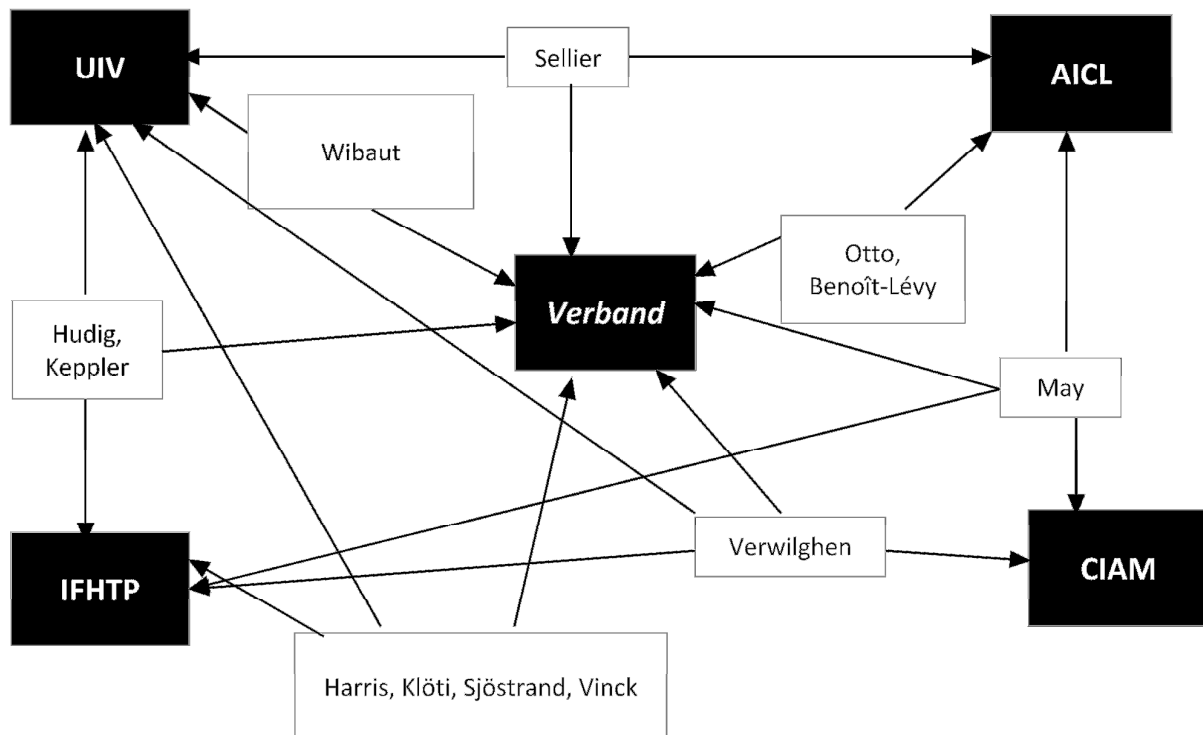


Figure 4.8b Cross-membership of prominent participants in the Urban Internationale circa 1933.

What did the social networks underpinning the IFHTP look like? Just like for the previous period we can discern an international community of housing and town planning professionals interacting at the conferences of the IFHTP, constituting a crossroad of the networks of the individual members and the organisations they represented, but still certain looseness surrounded the participants and their ties. The organisation of national participation was hardly institutionalized – apart from formal representation in the bodies - or programmatically defined. Participation was foremost based on practical considerations. The composure of the national delegations at the conferences shifted continuously. National

delegates made their choice to participate dependent of the conference's agenda and location, who else was attending and of course their personal agenda. The concept of the nebula is still the best concept available to define the social environment of the IFHTP. It is impossible to make a definite assessment of the extent and structure of the nebular social environment of the IFHTP, but it is possible to discern a contour of cross-membership of the active members. This contour slightly changes after the separation of the housing reformers and the subsequent exclusion of fervent supporters of these housing reformers in the bodies of the IFHTP, but these changes hardly affect the nebula as a whole (figures 4.7a and b and 4.8a and b). The interconnectivity of the active members through their dealings in several international organisations had such a substantial density that the severing of one tie - active membership of the IFHTP – did not affect the connections to other members, because ties through active membership in other bodies remained.

4.4 Heavy weather for transnationalism

Throughout the period 1926-1937 the IFHTP acted as international nongovernmental organisation and exponent of the wider transnational civil society. The steady stream of public bodies seeking membership continued, but direct participation and representation of national governments did not occur. Nonetheless, the distinction between national representatives and their government often blurred. Many of the active members moved in the governmental circles of their country and some were even directly employed by their national government. Although formally the IFHTP upheld a neutral position, in reality politics often entered the picture. For example, the supposed pro-Nazi mentality of the *Verband* increasingly became an issue in the negotiations between the IFHTP and the *Verband* as the tensions between the European nations grew in the 1930s.

Besides a growing influence of international political tensions, the IFHTP was especially characterized by a stagnation of growth in the period 1926-1937. After the 1926 Vienna congress, the spectacular growth of the early 1920s initially seemed to continue, but in the 1930s congress attendance stabilized at about 1,000 delegates (figure 4.7). If we consider the frequency of the conferences, the transnational activity of the IFHTP did not stabilize, but actually shrunk. Between 1930 and 1937 only 3 conferences were held, constituting a decrease in conference activity of more than 60%. How does this relate to the development of the transnational civil society at large in the late 1920s and 1930s? Available literature on the transnational civil society hints at the fact that transnational activity was on the wane in this period. Sociologists John Boli and George Thomas point out that after peaking in the second half of the 1920s, the number of foundations of international nongovernmental organisations suddenly dropped in the 1930s, whereas the number of dissolutions rose spectacularly.⁶⁵

Davies identifies three significant developments explaining the decline of transnational activity in the 1930s: the Great Depression, the rise of authoritarian governments and the onset of the Second World War. Obviously, the last development falls outside the period under scrutiny in this chapter. Davies argues that the internal and external factors as introduced in paragraphs 2.4 and 3.4 that previously contributed to the remarkable expansion of transnational activity, now were important in precipitating its decline. He provides examples of how these factors influenced the significant developments: the recalling of international lending, the shortcomings of democratization processes that paved the way for anti-democratic forces, the tension between ideological elements and power-

political elements in the post-war peace settlements and the failure of the transnational disarmament movement from stopping the rearmament of Germany. But we must conclude that Davies only refers to economic and political powers at play. He does not mention scientific, technological, environmental and social factors.⁶⁶ In all likelihood, these factors continued to benefit the transnational civil society. The advancing urbanisation remained an important rationale for transnational collaboration and technological and scientific innovations in the field of mass transportation and communication, for example the rise of commercial transatlantic flights in the 1930s, continued as well. However, the positive effects of these factors were insufficient to counter the economic and political powers that worked against transnational civil action.

The development of the IFHTP in the period 1926-1939 does not seem to follow the patterns of the transnational civil society as a whole very closely. Of course, the Great Depression and the rise of authoritarian governments, as well as the factors precipitating them, must have affected the IFHTP, but they coaxed with internal circumstances and conditions specific to the Urban Internationale. Firstly, there is no indication that the membership of the IFHTP actually declined. This also was the case for some other international organisations active in the Urban Internationale. Despite the consolidation of its membership, the frequency of the congresses of the IFHTP actually temporarily decreased between 1930 and 1937. Can we attribute this decrease entirely to the Great Depression? A lean purse might have been a consideration for some active members to tune their attendance down. Buder claims that the falling through of the 1932 Boston congress can be attributed to the economic downpour.⁶⁷ But, if the Great Depression constituted such difficult circumstances for the IFHTP, why were its international colleagues not similarly affected? Only the *Verband* suffered a similar fate. These facts support the assumption that the lingering controversy between the two bodies was an important factor, if not the most important factor, explaining the temporary drop in activity.

Just like the Great Depression, the rise of authoritarian regimes did have some effect on the IFHTP, but this effect is hard to measure. Generally, they were hostile towards the leftwing activists that flocked to the Urban Internationale, but they did not oppose the transnational organisations in the field of housing and town planning. National participation in these organisations, especially the larger, established ones, simply continued after changes of regime, although often representatives with leftwing sympathies or, in the case of Nazi Germany, Jewish origins, were obstructed by their governments or replaced by persons more favourable to the new regime. Some authoritarian regimes used participation in the Urban Internationale to boost their international prestige. For example, the 1929 congress of the IFHTP in Rome clearly served to glorify Mussolini and the Italian fascist regime. However, Nazi Germany went one step further. At the central level a strategy was developed to infiltrate the transnational organisations in the Urban International to ultimately gain control over them as a means to propagate the *Führerprinzip* on an international stage. The *Deutscher Gemeindetag* was the prime agent for the plans of the central Nazi regime. The *Verband* was the first to succumb to the Nazi infiltration. By 1934 it was little more than an extension of the Nazi regime. Similarly, the IFHTP and the International Union were also infiltrated by the Nazis after 1933, but unlike in the *Verband*, the Germans were (yet) unable to seize total control in the period up to 1937.

CHAPTER 4 HOUSING VERSUS PLANNING 1926-1937



[xii]

The Great Depression and the rise of totalitarian regimes affected transnational civil society: [xi] drawing *Oct 29 Dies irae* by James N. Rosenberg (1929) representing the collapse of stock market prices, initiating the Great Depression and [xii] Benito Mussolini (left) and Adolf Hitler (right) in Berlin, June 1940 (photo by Eva Braun, 1940).

[xiii]



4.5 Receding activity

Outwardly, it was mainly its activities that continued to define the IFHTP. After the rapid expansion of activities in the early 1920s, in the first half of the 1930s the activities seemed to falter. Most notably, the frequency of the congresses dropped dramatically. What factors influenced the activity of the IFHTP? What activities were actually maintained and initiated in the period 1926-1937?

4.5.1 Rivalry and evasion

Just like in the previous period the activities were governed by internal and external factors. The internal factors have already been discussed in paragraphs 4.2 and 4.3: the organisational framework, the culture of debate, active membership and an extensive social network to gather and disseminate knowledge and experience. In the period under discussion especially the housing controversy dominated the internal dealings in the organisation, which must have had a negative effect on the activities. It consumed time and energy that otherwise could have benefitted the activities. Moreover, it created an internal atmosphere of tension and distrust which was not favourable to collaboration in activities.

Most relevant external factors have already been mentioned in paragraph 4.4, dealing with transnational civil society. However, there is one external factor that deserves explicit elaboration: competition of rival organisations in the Urban Internationale. As the IFHTP was still heavily dependent of its congresses for revenues, it was vulnerable to competition from congresses of other organisations. In the second half of the 1920s the constellation of international organisations active in the Urban Internationale changed significantly. The merger of the IFHTP with the IHC in 1926 and the subsequent separation of the *Verband* from the IFHTP have already been discussed. The International Labour Office left the Urban International to pursue other interests at the threshold of the 1930s. The UIV remained the principal competitor of the IFHTP. But there were newcomers as well. The year 1928 spawned two new international organisations in the field of housing and town planning: *Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne* (CIAM) and the *Association Internationale des Cités Linéaires* (AICL). On paper substantial cross-membership was a good foundation for dialogue and collaboration, but in reality it often prompted the issue of loyalty. Cross-membership did little to reduce the tensions caused by the competition for domination in the Urban Internationale or overcome the squabbling over scarce resources and the fact that the organizations had similar frames of reference.⁶⁸

Already at the end of the previous period the UIV had already firmly re-established itself to become the foremost rival of the IFHTP, a position the UIV managed to strengthen in the period 1926-1937. The UIV happily stepped in the gap left by the temporary absence of the IFHTP in the international congress offerings in the early 1930s. Although previously the IFHTP had sought to reach agreements with the UIV, it now stubbornly ignored the latter. Some of the, mainly British, active members blamed the UIV as the intriguer behind the separation of the Frankfurt *Verband*.⁶⁹ The fact that the executives of the UIV and the *Verband* both featured the same leading continental activists fronted by Wibaut did not do the strained relations good either. The UIV was ignored when it presented itself as intermediary for the negotiations with the *Verband* and it even decided to drop the matter, when it was discovered that the UIV had published the results of an enquiry of the IFHTP

without asking permission.⁷⁰ Although on the surface, the IFHTP upheld an attitude of indifference towards the UIV, we can be sure that it followed the activities of the UIV closely, if only to avoid falling behind.

In the second half of the 1920s the International Labour Office (ILO) continued its ventures in the international housing arena. Its publications on the state of housing affairs in Europe and the United States had secured a prominent position at the frontline of the international housing reform movement. After the dissolution of the IHC it had to reconsider possible partnerships. Its favorite had been swallowed by the IFHTP, an organization the ILO never really got along with. At an official level there was some form of contact between the two, but this contact did not go much further than the exchange of information and publications and official representation at the congresses. So the ILO searched for new partners, which it found in the UIV, that thus could take advantage of the statistical work provided by the ILO. But the ILO wanted more substantial support in the Urban Internationale and behind the curtains started to encourage the dissatisfied housing reformers in their clash with the bureau, promising substantial support if they were to create a new international body, exclusively dedicated to housing issues. Once the separation of the housing reformers was a fact, the support was provided, albeit not free of charge. Along with the support came a directing hand from Geneva. Initially, the *Verband* benefitted from this, but once the ILO abandoned its interest in housing in the 1930s, it put the *Verband* in a tight spot.⁷¹

The newcomers CIAM and the AICL ran operations too small to bother the IFHTP. Nevertheless, it is interesting to briefly discuss them for several reasons. Firstly, there is some overlap among the congress delegates, although cross-membership among active members was limited. Moreover, the newcomers still retained a freshness and more radical approach aimed at social reform that the IFHTP had somewhat sacrificed along the way to make it to the major league in the 1920s, posing a challenge with respect to moral objectives. The CIAM was little more than a secluded, select band of like-minded modernist architects. To the CIAM modern housing and town planning was intrinsically linked with the application of modernist design. It placed itself on a moral pedestal. CIAM was in touch with modern times and could act as an harbinger of the future, whereas established bodies in the field of housing and planning, especially the IFHTP, were disqualified as clinging on to traditional, outdated housing and town planning conceptions.

Although the CIAM dismissed the IFHTP as outdated and the IFHTP ignored the boisterous newcomer, the gap between the two bodies was not as absolute as one might expect. We encounter several CIAM-members, most notably Ernst May, among the delegates at the congresses of the IFHTP. One could say that the congresses of the IFHTP in the early 1920s served as a primary school for architects as May and van Eesteren who would make a big name for themselves in the second half of the 1920s. This slumbering connection of CIAM-members with the IFHTP becomes evident if we take a look at the agendas of the CIAM congresses. Architectural historian Somer has recently convincingly argued that the conferences of the IFHTP served as a point of departure for the CIAM-congresses.⁷² Whereas the IFHTP was dismissed as being unable to progress beyond a mere summary of existing housing and town planning experience, CIAM explicitly wanted to make a step towards the future. It is debatable whether CIAM actually achieved this ambitious goal. For example, the famed Charter of Athens, the result of the 1933 CIAM gathering although it was first

published in heavily edited form by Le Corbusier in 1942, claimed to offer a new innovative approach for the planning and construction of rational cities, but it basically only offered old principles. This also explained why CIAM failed to capitalize its work of its 1933 conference.

The relation of the AICL with the IFHTP was ambiguous as well. George Benoît Lévy was the spiritual father of the newcomer, which was little more than an international extension of the French Garden City Association. Although Benoît Lévy had lost ground in the IFHTP before the onset of the First World War, he now returned to the forefront of the Urban Internationale with this new organization. Benoît Lévy disseminated an interesting hotchpotch of rivaling town planning conceptions. He had started out as a pure garden city advocate, although his definition of the garden city idea was notoriously broad and vague. After a meeting with Arturo Soria y Mata in 1912 he fell under the spell of the linear city concept.⁷³ It must have been around this time that he combined the two concepts in what he regarded a superior alternative: linear garden cities. In the 1920s he enhanced his linear garden city with yet another town planning concept that appalled the old British garden city workers: hexagonal planning, as proposed by the likes of Noulan Couchon and Arthur C. Comey.⁷⁴ Benoît Lévy's conception of modern town planning was not to the liking of the IFHTP – it dismissed linear cities as inadmissible deviations of the garden city and, as Russia was the main market of the linear city idea, politically too controversial - so he had to establish his own international body to propagate his ideas. Although the IFHTP chose to ignore the AICL, the latter nonetheless was successful in attracting sympathizers from the membership of the IFHTP, especially garden city workers of the earliest hour. Although Benoît Lévy and the linear city were banned from the agenda of the congresses, he bore no grudge against the IFHTP. On the contrary, he praised the IFHTP as a fellow campaigner. Ironically, the AICL actually used the corridors of the congresses of the IFHTP to arrange meetings of its members, to maintain and expand its networks and ultimately to spread its linear city message.⁷⁵

4.5.2 Outline of activities

Although the lingering housing controversy and worsening international economic and political climate put the activities of the IFHTP under pressure, it nevertheless largely managed to continue its activities, although the volume of its transnational activity decreased. Perhaps the most telling sign that the activity of the IFHTP was affected by the difficult situation was the fact that it did not initiate new activities. What activities then did the IFHTP offer in the period 1926-1937?

Congresses

In the first half of the 1920s the conferences evolved into large *CityEvents* (paragraph 3.5.4). Can we still use this label for the conferences in the period 1926-1937? The production process of these events remained characterized by the interaction of the event-owner, the city host, the media and the national representative(s). However, if we check the other characteristics of *CityEvents*, we soon run into troubles. The congresses were still held in different cities, but it is hard to identify a specific time cycle. After the Vienna congress of 1926 the IFHTP wanted to maintain the annual frequency of its congresses, although a congress for 1927 was skipped to concentrate on the formation of the housing section.⁷⁶ Initially this set course proceeded as planned with congresses in 1928 (Paris) and 1929 (Rome), but then problems started. The planned 1930 congress in Berlin was postponed to

1931. The planned 1932 congress in Boston was postponed as well and when the intended city host was unable to provide financial securities it was called off altogether.⁷⁷ Desperate to hold a next international congress soon, the IFHTP then turned to the city of Prague to host a conference in 1934, but as preparations were postponed here as well, the IFHTP switched to London, where it finally managed to hold a congress in 1935. The year 1936 was kept congress-free to concentrate on negotiations with the *Verband*, but at its 1937 congress in Paris it managed to pick up its annual frequency of congresses again up to the outbreak of the Second World War. If we evaluate the whole period, we must conclude that the IFHTP planned its congresses at regular intervals and that the deviations primarily originate in postponements and an unfortunate culmination of extraordinary circumstances. Therefore, I would argue that the congresses were still governed by a specific (annual) time cycle.

According to Rennen a generic event formula is the main characteristic of his *CityEvents*-concept. If we analyse the agenda of the conferences in the period 1926-1937 it is clear that they follow the same basic pattern: all conferences offer meetings of the internal bodies, thematic sessions dedicated to the presentation and discussion of national reports, study trips, visits to the adjoining exhibitions, an elaborate leisure program and a study tour at the end of the conference. This is not to say that the conference formula was static. The IFHTP continuously sought modifications and improvements, especially for the arrangements of the sessions, to neutralise the inevitable negative effects of mass-participation. It held high hopes that the sectional division of the members, to be translated in parallel sectional sessions in the conference proceedings would reduce the overcrowding during the sessions. However, the controversy over the housing section divided the members and the section idea was subsequently dropped in 1929. Nevertheless, some form of division was inevitable. General sessions with attendance of 1,000 or more delegates simply was unworkable. Thus it was decided to introduce parallel sessions at the 1929 Rome congress to put the pressure off.

After the Vienna congress it was decided to maintain the method of national reports based on standardized questionnaires. The reports were expected “to convey the results of clearly defined study of particular subjects and should not be used for the mere expression of personal opinions.”⁷⁸ Undoubtedly, the national reports served to move the town planning profession into a more rational direction. Additionally, they obviously facilitated international comparison. On a more practical level, there could be far more national reports fitted into a session than traditional paper presentations, if needed summarized in a general report. This must have been a huge advantage to raise participation and commitment among the members. Still, the new arrangement for the sessions was not all roses. Although the reports were to convey an objective survey, the reporters nonetheless often focussed on their personal views and achievements. Referring to the usual character of the congresses Dutch representative Hudig in 1928 noticed that there were “lots of announcements by persons who readily told what was being done in their country and preferably what was done by themselves” and wondered whether it would not be better to return to the comprehensive discussion of a single subject, as had been done in Amsterdam in 1924.⁷⁹ Hudig’s remark brings us to a more profound problem originating from the embracing of the national reports: most national reports only offered brief statements of the status quo in the represented country, heavily interlaced with personal preferences and achievements, which at the very best could serve as a brief summary of national housing and town planning experience. The national reports definitely lacked the profoundness and comprehensive

treatment that had been characteristic of the old papers, delivered by renowned planners that had been handpicked on the basis of their pioneering achievements. This posed a challenge for the attending audience to achieve a surplus by comparing and analysing the

single reports and extrapolating their results through discussions in the future by defining probable and desirable scenarios. However, this next step was seldom taken, instigating German art historian Joseph Gantner to remark in 1929 that the IFHTP no longer served any objectives; it merely collected and recorded data, adding nothing to the exchanges that had already been taking place in the Urban Internationale for a long time.⁸⁰

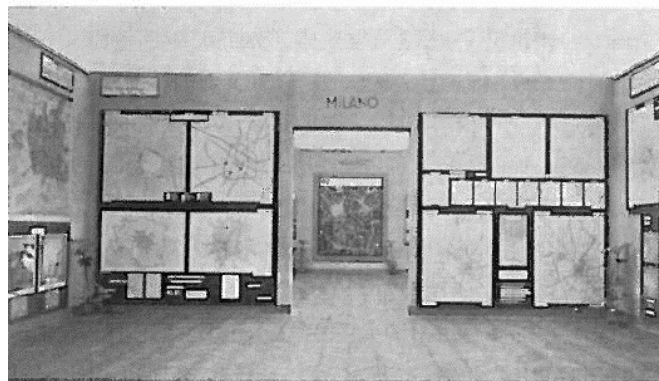
Periodical

Unlike the conferences, the difficult internal and external conditions hardly affected the frequency of the publication of the *Bulletin*. The rigid threefold arrangement adopted in the previous period was maintained. However, this does not mean that the *Bulletin* was continued in unaltered form. In 1926 the questionnaire was transported from the periodical to the conference, a decision that was canonised at the following conferences. Although the IFHTP continued to issue questionnaires for the *Bulletin*, the transfer to the conferences nevertheless structurally created space in the mid-section of the *Bulletin*. This lack of footage was partly solved by publishing summaries in French and German of the featured contributions – up to 1927 all contributions in the *Bulletin* were exclusively written in English. The remaining space was filled by an increasing volume of articles offering surveys of recent national and local housing and town planning legislation and policies and project presentations. One could argue that at this point the periodical gained ground as the main medium for the dissemination of innovative housing and town planning achievements among the members and the importance of the conference more than ever became defined as scenery for transnational networking, although we have to remember that the exhibition and study tours continued to function as a major condensed transnational display of leading housing and town planning experiences. For example Radburn (1929), the pioneering American interpretation of the satellite town to meet the demands of the motor age, was not featured prominently at the 1929 Rome congress, but was introduced to the members through the *Bulletin* in February 1930.⁸¹

Committee work

After the Vienna conference, existing subcommittees initially continued in their old capacity, although it was decided that eventually most of their activities would have to be transferred to the sections that were to be formed. However, the section idea was soon abandoned once the dissatisfied housing reformers had stepped outside the IFHTP. Instead a technical committee was installed in 1929.⁸² This technical committee served as the permanent brain trust of the international organisation. It would produce a series of questionnaires in the 1930s. Additionally, in 1934 it could present the long-awaited international housing and town-planning glossary after eight years of hard labour. Unlike the 1924 report on international town planning annotation, the glossary was well-received and well-circulated in the Urban Internationale, providing a welcome international exposure for the IFHTP in the absence of its congresses.⁸³

CHAPTER 4 HOUSING VERSUS PLANNING 1926-1937



[xiv] the town planning exhibition at the 1929 IFHTP Rome congress

[xv] Radburn, the suburb of New York designed by Clarence Stein and Henry Wright (1929)



4.6 The mission bisected

The arrival of the members of the IHC and the subsequent housing controversy inevitably caused a reorientation towards housing. However, the past treatment of housing issues did not fit the ideas of the newcomers. Although they did not deny the intimate relation between housing and planning, a majority among them thought that the housing question should be addressed in its own right, not a mere, albeit very important, part of an expanding town planning profession. Thus the conference agenda of the Vienna congress was split in two: one half was reserved for housing issues, whereas the other half was devoted to the delineation of a comprehensive planning discipline. This division was maintained for the following conferences and subsequently two distinctly different paths, sometimes converging, sometimes diverging, took shape: housing and town planning.

4.6.1 The housing path: triumph of the one-family house

Only at the 1926 Vienna congress the housing theme was reintroduced as an independent subject on the agenda. However, at first sight no innovative insights were acquired in the years of absence. Housing discussions continued to focus on accommodating the lower income classes. Housing was still regarded as a medium of social reform, although ideological considerations had been moved to the background to make place for a practical treatment of economic and ultimately political requirements. The practical discussions focussed on two closely related strands: the principal choice between cottages and tenements and slum clearance.

Cottages versus tenements

The principal choice between the one-family house and more collective forms of housing by far attracted the most attention of all housing subjects. The subject was first introduced at the 1926 Vienna congress. Undoubtedly, the city host wanted to harvest international acclaim for its bold housing policies, predominantly offering tenements in high-rise superblocks. Unsurprisingly, the topic unleashed a fierce polemic. The emancipation of unfortunate city dwellers from overcrowded tenement blocks to cottages with their own garden had been the appealing rationale of the early garden city movement. This ideal was silently transferred and acknowledged as part of the regional decentralisation strategy which the IFHTP had adopted in the mid-1920s. High-rise building simply did not fit into this ideal picture. Of course the controversy between cottagers and advocates of tenements had been one of the internal issues leading to the demise of the IHC.⁸⁴ In many participating countries the issue of high-rise versus low-rise was a topical debate as well, above all in Germany and Austria, the countries that provided the largest national delegations in Vienna. The private builders were inclined to hold on to the old practice to accommodate the lower income classes, which for most cities in continental Europe meant *Mietskasernen*, whereas most progressive reformers advocated the one-family house with a garden. Most municipal authorities still favoured cottages, but the larger municipalities had long resorted to more collective forms of housing to address the pressing housing shortages.

Although discussions in Vienna were fierce and emotions ran high, in the end a majority favoured the one-family house with a garden. This was translated in a condemnation of the housing policy of the hosting city. The exclusivity of high-rise tenement blocks in the city was heavily criticized.⁸⁵ However, the exclusivity of the cottage was long outstripped by reality, and two years later at the Paris congress the international party had to recoup its position on



[xvi]

High-rise tenements did not please the majority of the delegates at the IFHTP: [xv] Karl Marxhof (1927-193) by architect Karl Ehn, the epitome of social housing in Red Vienna, and [xvi] garden suburb Suresnes near Paris (photo taken in the 1920s) of which prominent IFHTP member Henri Sellier was the mayor.

[xvii]



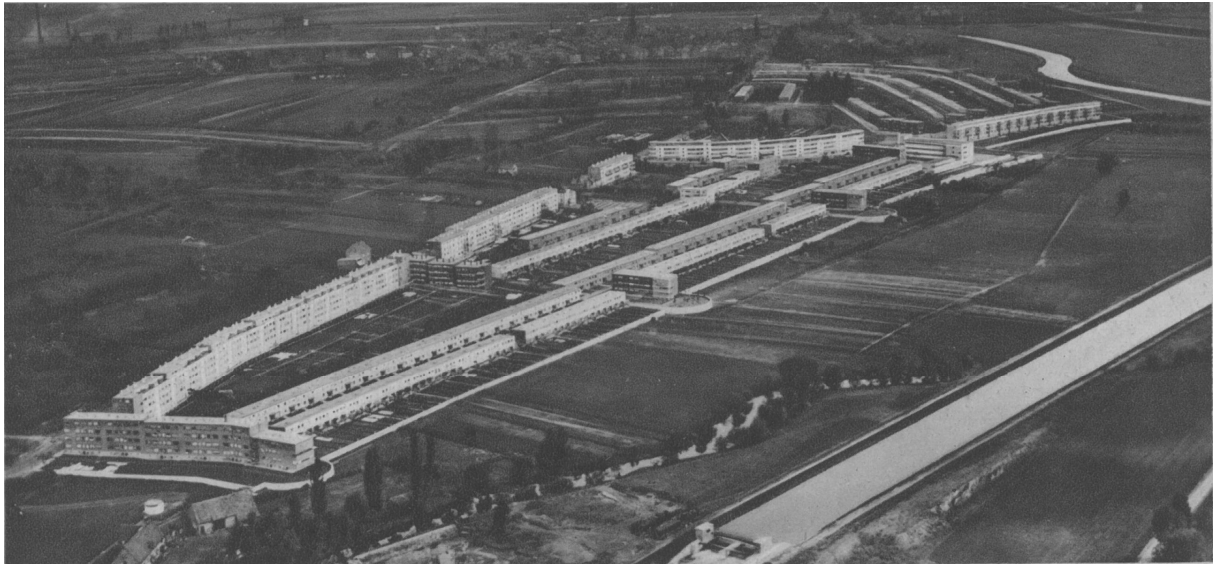
the subject. Although the one-family house was still upheld as the most suitable form of housing, both from an economic perspective and a social desirability, now the IFHTP nevertheless felt inclined to accept tenement blocks as a necessary evil. However, the delegates were reluctant to transcend their familiar mental horizon of ground-bound dwelling and drew a firm maximum of three storeys. This revision of the IFHTP of its position on high-rise buildings was inadequate to meet the reality of contemporary municipal housing policies. Delegates at the 1928 Paris congress could see for themselves at the inspection of the Parisian garden suburbs, that Parisian flats had long breached the three storey barrier.⁸⁶

So for the 1929 Rome congress the IFHTP returned to the issue once more. Should it stick to its ideal of a maximum of three storeys, or should the development of high-rise be given a chance? Some delegates, most notably Lancelot Keay and H. Rutherford from Liverpool, thought ten-storey blocks of flats were perfectly admissible, provided they were properly embedded in a good urban development plan. The majority of delegates outright condemned high-rise. Lawrence Veiller of the National Housing Association (US) predicted that the automatic lift and fire-proof construction would make twelve-storey blocks of flats available for the poor, but he dismissed this probability as an inhuman form of public housing. Arie Keppler of the Amsterdam housing department and member of this city's High-Rise Committee, had studied high-rise experience abroad extensively and had come to the conclusion that there were not many valid arguments to support vertical development.⁸⁷ If anything, the discussions revealed that practical experience to pass a well-founded judgement was severely missed. In 1937 the IFHTP once more returned to the issue, now re-baptized "horizontal and/or vertical building." The sessions revealed that the issue was still guaranteed to deliver fierce debates, but opinions had hardly changed and *Town and Country Planning* contently reported: "Single-Family House Wins Battle Against Flats at International Town Planning Congress."⁸⁸

*"Up with the Houses, Down with the Slums"*⁸⁹

One of the most notable new subjects on the conference agenda was the abolition of slums, first introduced at the 1931 Berlin Congress. Although almost impossible to separate from the broader urban renewal theme, slum clearance was nevertheless treated as an independent housing issue at the housing sessions of the congresses. Everywhere in Europe, immediately after the War absolute priority had been given to building new houses to meet the pressing housing shortages which were subsequently built in the urban periphery in the form of satellites and city extension on garden city lines. However, the Howardian logic – the building of garden cities would eventually dissolve the urban slums – failed to materialize. All who could afford fled to the (watered-down) realized adaptations of the garden city gospel, but an enduring underclass remained in the slums. Slum clearance that was taken at hand had the character of occasional patchwork and did not really solve the problem, as slum-dwellers simply moved from one slum to another.

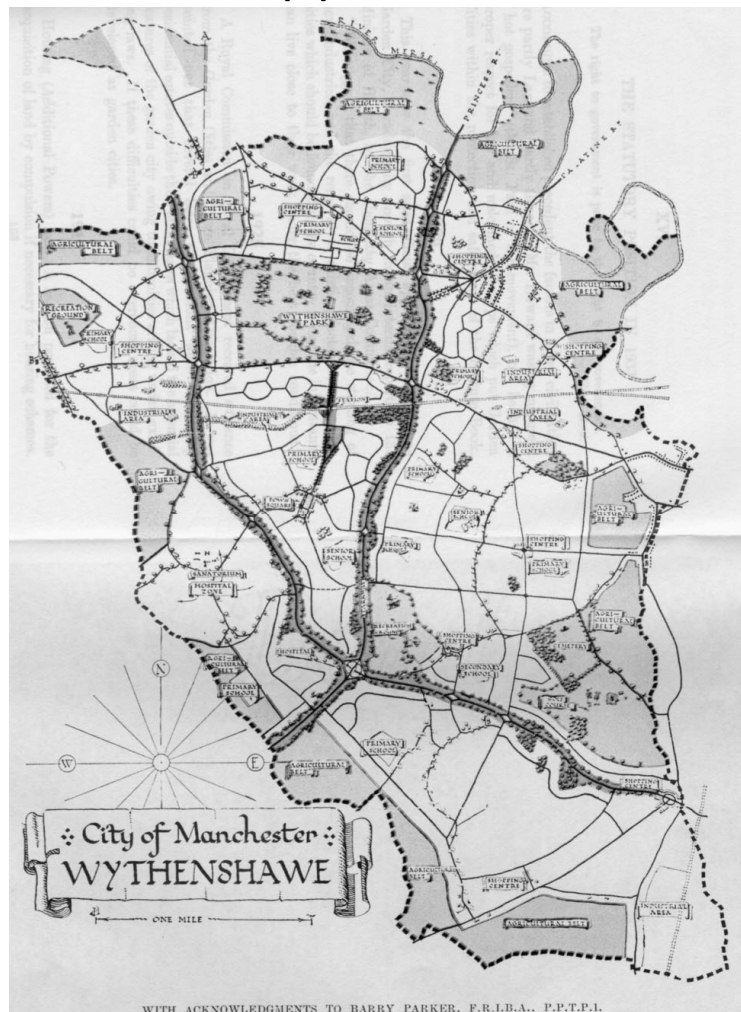
Although the focus on quantity persevered, by the mid-1920s the neglected slums increasingly became a prominent object of planning. For one thing, in the spirit of the old town planning master Haussmann slums were levelled to make place for new arterial by-passes and broadening of streets to relieve the growing traffic jam and park systems to upgrade the hygienic standards. Additionally, with the post-war advance of socialist administrations national and local housing policies became more socially coloured.



[xviii]

Low-rise housing schemes were favoured by the majority of the members of the IFHTP: Römerstadt at Frankfurt am Main (1927-1929) supervised by Ernst May [xvii] and Wythenshawe near Manchester (from 1927) by Barry Parker [xviii].

[xix]



Pioneering German sociologist Georg Simmel already at the beginning of the twentieth century had stated that the slum was not just a problem of overcrowding, bad housing and bad hygiene, but above all a physical concentration of social problems, a message that was taken up and elaborated upon by the Chicago School of Sociology in a series of pioneering publications starting in the mid-1920s.⁹⁰ The socialist government of Vienna was one of the very first to pick up the glove and declare war on the slum. Unfit houses were torn down and replaced by high-rise 'superblocks' with an enclosed public garden offering a range of public amenities.⁹¹ Although the exclusivity of high-rise was fiercely condemned at the 1926 congress of the Federation, the Viennese housing policy nevertheless was highly influential. Germany was closely behind. The Weimar Republic had ambitious plans for public housing. Following the Viennese example, a rent tax (*Hauszinssteuer*) was introduced in 1924 to finance public housing, providing a solid foundation for the impressive housing production in the later 1920s. The majority of the new houses were built in housing estates (*Siedlungen*) in suburbia, but German housing experience offered slum clearance examples as well. Just like in Vienna, unfit houses were usually replaced by flats, sometimes echoing the Viennese superblocks, but increasingly introducing modernist *Zeilenbau* (rows of flats).⁹² In 1930 Britain followed the continental slum clearance lead in its 1930 Housing Act. Rather than following the rent tax system, the English adopted a state subsidy system. But the results were largely the same: unfit houses were replaced by high-rise tenements.⁹³

What did the IFHTP make of slum clearance experience? Basically it did little more than to recapitulate existing controversies surrounding slum clearance experience at the 1931 Berlin congress. Obligatory discussions on expropriation, compensation and finance, revealed that some countries still had inadequate legal instruments for slum clearance, but generally insufficient financial means were the main culprit behind lagging clearance action. Concerning finance, the British system of state subsidies was acknowledged as best practice. Also here the sensitive issue of tenement blocks reared its head, as delegates from England, Holland, Ireland and Scotland lamented the re-housing in tenements on the slum site.⁹⁴ A return to the issue at the 1935 congress in London at the "Re-housing the People" session brought very little new insights. A desperate faction still advocated re-housing in cottages, but everybody knew that high-rise housing on former slum sites was a reality that would not go away. The congress did reveal that by the mid-1930s slum clearance had become a priority in most participating countries. Most prominent newcomer on the frontline in the battle against slums was the United States under Roosevelt and his New Deal. Especially the New York City Housing Authority, America's largest public housing agency established in 1934, was very active in this field.⁹⁵

4.6.2 The town planning path: from decentralization to re-centralization

Whereas the housing sessions of the congresses took up issues that had pre-occupied the late IHC, the sessions devoted to town and regional planning posed a continuation of the (regional) planning discourse as introduced at the Amsterdam congress of 1924. However, the original strategy of regional decentralisation was soon found wanting. The large Viennese inner-city tenements blocks that delegates of the 1926 congress of the IFHTP could witness for themselves, perfectly demonstrated that the old congested and overcrowded cities did not dissolve as satellites conquered the countryside. This was not just happening in Vienna, but practically all major cities in the western world. The IFHTP had to pay more attention to the re-planning of the old cities. In the period under discussion in this chapter,

the old city became the starting point of a comprehensive re-planning of the human habitat. The IFHTP turned its attention to the historic old city centre and wondered what planning measures were required to adapt the historic urban fabric to meet modern conditions and subsequently sought methods to regulate urban growth. For the first time it looked beyond the essentially urban context of planning to see what planning could mean for the countryside. The framework of the planners steadily expanded; in 1926 they started with regional planning, but soon they were talking about national planning and by the mid-1930s the optimists were even considering international planning. Despite this optimism, the members of the Federation were no fools. They were well aware that the instruments available fell short to make their dreams reality. Therefore they also paid attention to legislation and survey.

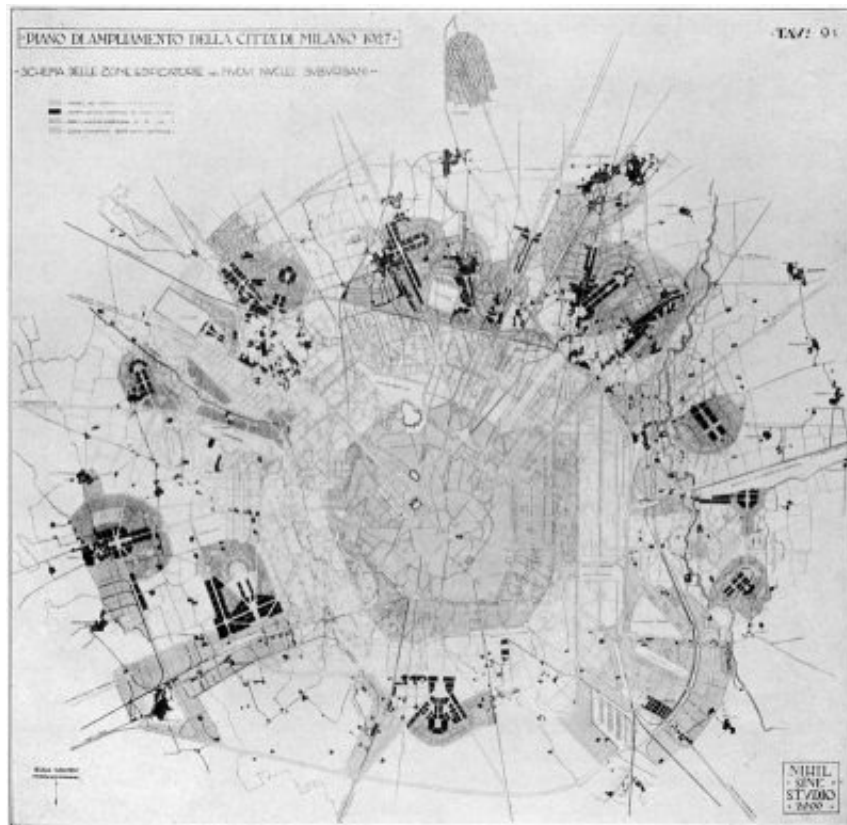
Conserving the historic city centre

In 1929 Rome provided the perfect background to address the question how to restructure historic cities to meet modern conditions. Up for discussion was the Italian obsession with preserving the old historic city centres, an obsession that had already started in 1913 with the publication of *Città vecchie ed edilizia nuova* by Gustavo Giovannoni and that had become part of official governmental policy under the fascist regime.⁹⁶ This of course was the very opposite of Le Corbusier's city of towers, that was to radically transplant the historic Parisian urban fabric. The Italians wanted to disconnect the old city from the dynamics of modern life. New developments were to be concentrated in newer districts. This Italian view received overwhelming support from leading foreign planners at the Rome congress, although one can wonder whether they truly grasped the implications of the fascist plans for the historic city centre. For example, the plans for Rome's city heart encompassed large-scale demolition of existing buildings – about a third of the buildings was to be torn down – to give way to new thoroughfares and the excavation of imperial forums; the local population was pushed to the urban fringe. Everybody agreed a preliminary survey was essential to preserve local characteristics and to make the best of the potentialities present. Re-planning old quarters was to be limited to enhancing artistic and historic values and hygienic improvements. The creation of new (decentralised) centres was to avoid the re-development of historic city hearts. Traffic was to be diverted from the city heart. Large scale demolitions to facilitate infrastructural expansion was considered undesirable. Most delegates favoured the construction of ring roads. The ring road nearest to the old centre should mark the extreme limit of radical transformations. Unavoidable new arteries cutting through old quarters should proceed with extreme caution. Everybody agreed that complete transformation of a central area was only justifiable when it contained nothing of interest and hygienic conditions were unsatisfactory. Moreover, it was agreed that any central plan should be part of a regional plan and that in the future the issue of historic city centres should be addressed as part of the bigger picture.⁹⁷

Satellites

At the Rome congress the issue of the regulation of town extensions was also addressed and subsequently elaborated at the following congresses. Traditional city growth in the form of a widening circle was explicitly rejected. City extension should be taken up at the level of the regional plan, to be initiated with a sound survey. Two rivalling regional planning concepts were put forward, one of British origin and one of German origin, reflecting two dominant

CHAPTER 4 HOUSING VERSUS PLANNING 1926-1937



[xx] city extension plan for Milan (1927) by Cesare Chiodi, preserves the historical city centre.

[xxi] view of demolition in 1932 in Rome to create the Via dei Fori Imperiali for triumphal marches and parades

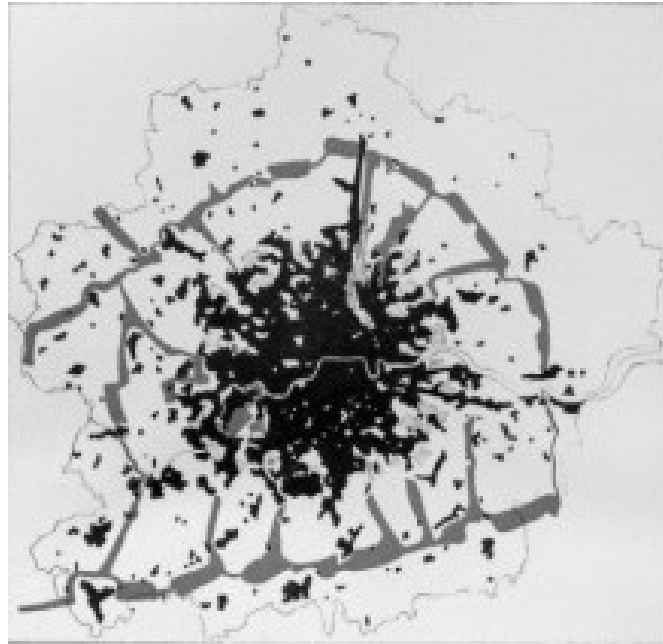


town planning 'camps' among the delegates at the congresses of the IFHTP: satellites and wedge-shaped extensions. Of course Raymond Unwin was the undisputed champion of the 'satellite camp.' Especially his work as technical advisor of the Greater London Regional planning Committee (GLRPC), a committee installed by Minister of Health Neville Chamberlain in 1927 to draft proposals to control and direct the pressing, uncontrollable suburban growth, was very influential. Unwin prepared the two GLRPC *Reports* (1929, 1933). The first presented alternatives indicating planned development on a protected 'green background' against a lesser measure where greenbelts were protected within a development area potentially spreading outwards over the region. In 1933 the first alternative was developed in the context of the 1931 Census returns. The Committee was reconstituted a year later and the LCC took a dominant role, with the green belt concept given statutory backing in 1938. Decentralization to New Towns was enacted in 1946, following the recommendation of Abercrombie's *Greater London Plan* (1944).⁹⁸ Besides Unwin's work, the system of *Siedlungen* in Germany's *Ruhrkohlenbezirk* (see paragraph 3.3.2), continued to be a major influence as the regional planning experience of the Ruhr area was adopted across Germany.

In Rome, British planner Patrick Abercrombie presented the case for satellites, supported by the national reporters from Denmark (A. Bjerre) and France (M. Poëte). At the Berlin congress (1931) the satellite idea was advocated by George Pepler. In Berlin, the satellite supporters fiercely opposed the advance of high rise business premises, replacing residential buildings in the city centres which, coupled with a continued migration of population to the urban periphery, led to an intensification of traffic pressure. According to them, high-rise should not be tolerated, unless adequate land was surrendered to provide for additional access of light and air and for accommodating the extra traffic caused by the extra bulk of buildings. They upheld well planned satellite town development as the superior alternative, although they could not completely ignore the advance of new inner-city business centres. In this context, Pepler chose to redefine the old strategy of regional decentralisation to regional recentralisation in order to reconcile and coordinate the two seemingly opposite urbanization tendencies: concentration within given areas and decentralisation of other areas.⁹⁹ Pepler was not alone in his plea for recentralisation. In the introduction of his *Recent advances in town planning* (1932) Thomas Adams supported the idea of recentralisation. "The evils of congestion in centres are a consequence of badly organized and ill-planned centralization but not of centralization in itself. The remedy is to be found neither by stemming the tide of outward movement from the centres nor by artificially promoting the outward flow without any improvement of organization and planning."¹⁰⁰

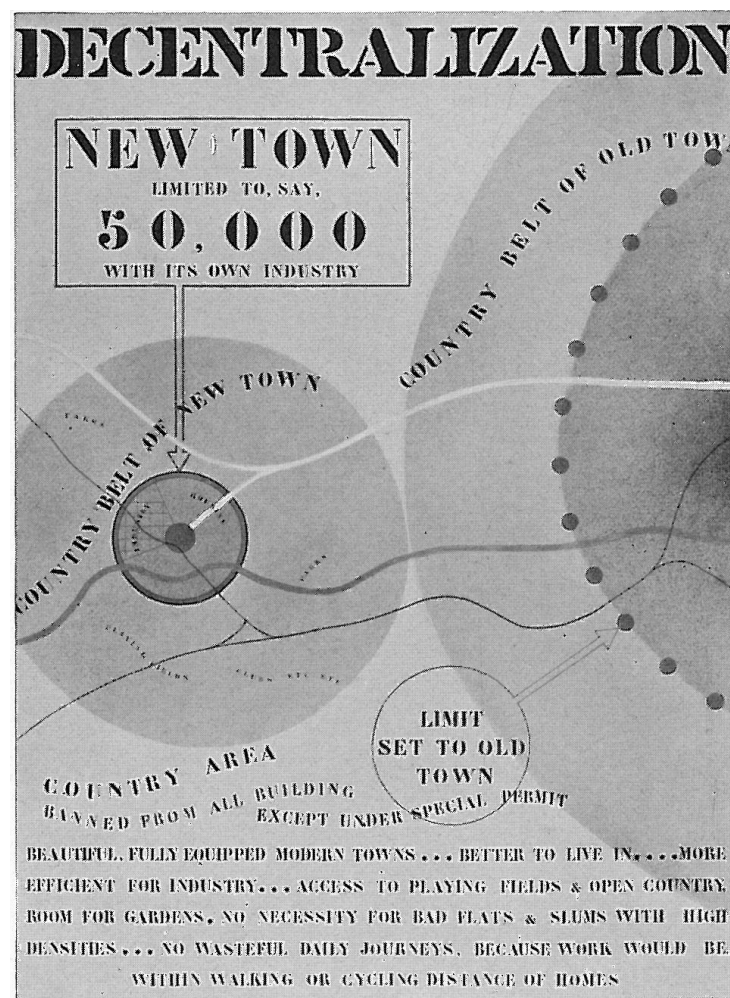
Wedge-shaped extensions

The other solution was wedge-shaped extensions along radial arterial roads, reserving the cheaper land in between for park systems. This of course called the plan of R. Eberstadt, B. Möhring and R. Petersen for Gross-Berlin (1910) and Fritz Schumacher's plans for Hamburg, as presented at the 1924 Amsterdam congress to mind and it also echoed the city extensions proposed by American Arthur C. Comey (see paragraphs 3.6.1 and 3.6.2). This lobed city model was championed by Roman Heiligenthal, town planning professor at the *Technische Hochschule* in Karlsruhe, at the 1929 Rome congress, seconded by Viennese *Stadtbaudirektor* Franz Musil. The Italians were the most notable supporters, as could be



[xxii] Unwin's 1929 regional plan for Greater London

[xxiii] Pamphlet, (re)printed in the periodical of the IFHTP in 1938 to illustrate Pepler's call for (re)centralization



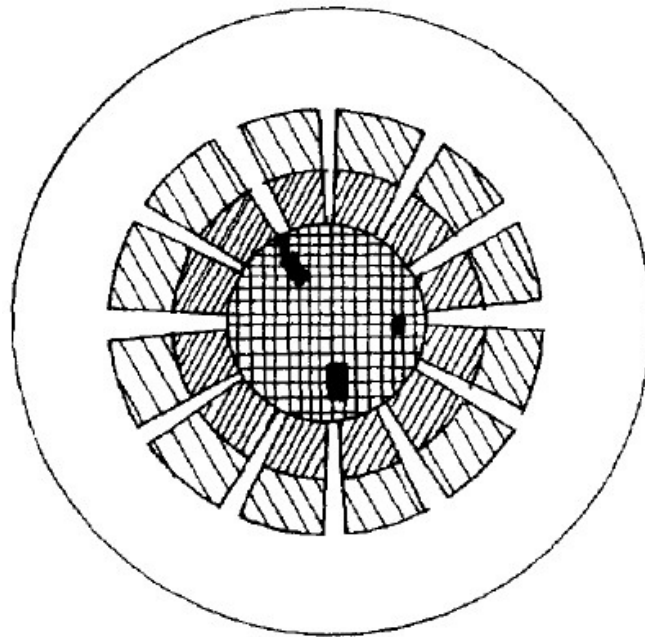
witnessed in the extension plans for Rome as presented by Cesare Chiodi. Both concepts stressed the importance of infrastructure and the need to approach extension planning from a regional perspective.¹⁰¹

Roman Heiligenthal had been one of the German town planning theorists that reflected on the leading thinkers of the pre-war period (regular extension planning as proposed by Baumeister and Stübgen, Sittes principles for artistic town planning and the German garden city advocates).¹⁰² Together with Fischer (1922) Gurlitt (1920) and Wolf (1919) he interpreted these influences of the past in a new context.¹⁰³ They rejected 'Hausmannian' large scale demolishment of old buildings to give way to new streets. Instead, they advocated the construction of streets that would connect the *Altstädte* to smaller communities on the fringe. Similarly, the Sittesque principles of artistic town planning no longer were exclusively interpreted as aesthetic elements but, rather, were perceived as contributing to the spatial definition of sub-areas and facilitating the creation of *Heimat*. Moreover, these authors moved away from a localised design focus and project orientation towards a concern with large scale (region and eventual nation), multi-community and multi-faceted problems.

According to planning historian John Robert Mullin the roots of this reorientation can be found in the proposal by Eberstadt, Möhring and Petersen prepared for the Greater Berlin competition in 1910. They saw that planning, if it was to be successful, had to become policy oriented.¹⁰⁴ Already in 1909 Eberstadt had claimed that false economic, social and administrative developments resulted in poor artistic results in the realm of town planning. Urban evils could not be eradicated by abolishing or changing aesthetically oriented byelaws.¹⁰⁵ It was far more important to pursue a coherent solution for economic and social problems in the modern cities and to establish an administrative framework to achieve this end. This administrative basis was conceived as a necessity to achieve aesthetic innovations. Eberstadt prepared a town planning conception that was later put into practice by Fritz Schumacher in planned city extensions for Hamburg and Cologne. Zoning regulations were to prevent 'mutilating' allocations. Interventions by the *Baupolizei* on private initiative were acceptable to Schumacher, if based on grounds explicitly including aesthetic considerations. Heiligenthal later questioned this insistence on aesthetics in planning matters. In 1929 he remarked that aesthetic criteria were only relative if seen in time: "What in one epoch is considered to be 'beautification' of a building, in another is regarded as a 'tarnish of beauty' and is removed."¹⁰⁶

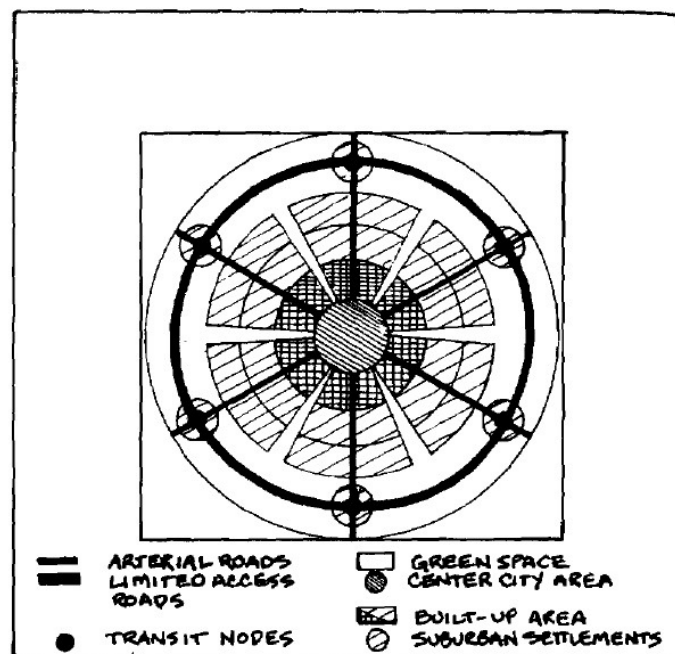
Infrastructure

The town planning discussions at Rome had unambiguously pointed towards comprehensive infrastructural planning at national, regional and local levels as the key to regulate the preservation of urban heritage and expansion of cities. Therefore it was only natural to explore the 'traffic problem' in relation to town and regional planning at the next congress in Berlin in 1931. The presented reports clearly revealed that, although greatly varying in kind and degree, the traffic problem everywhere was acute and menacing. Experienced difficulties not so much related to finding the right remedies, but rather to induce the responsible authorities to adopt them. Delegates agreed that the volume of traffic and the problems it created would only increase, unless the development and redevelopment of land and the organisation of all means of transport (railways, roads, omnibuses, tramways and air transport) were directed in accordance with comprehensive plans. These plans had



(xxiv) Diagram of wedge-shaped city by Eberstadt, Möhring and Petersen, published for the Greater Berlin competition in 1910 (source Heiligenthal 1921).

[xxv] Schematic plan for a major city by Paul Wolf (1919)



to account for national, regional and local needs, to be effected through zoning and co-relation of communication. A sound majority of the delegates urged the consolidation of the different agencies of transport under one management, the separation of suburban and main traffic lines and the decentralisation of stations destined for the distribution of goods.¹⁰⁷

Planning the countryside

Thus far (regional) planning had only been addressed as a means to get a grip on the post-war urban explosion. This changed in 1935 as the IFHTP chose to discuss 'planned rural development and the preservation of the countryside.'¹⁰⁸ The two words 'development' and 'preservation' seemed to stand in formal opposition – the first favours development; the latter the status quo - but they actually perfectly reflected the duality in the reports. Some delegates upheld a pastoral conception of the countryside as a place of natural beauty and wholeness, yet untouched by the evils of urban life. The pastoralists wanted to preserve and restore the countryside for beauty's sake (for example Robert de Souza of the French Society of Urbanists) or to transform it into a refuse for the city dwellers (for example Viennese *Stadtbaudirektor* Franz Musil). Other delegates stressed the economic interdependency of town and country. British rural planner Lord Phillimore dismissed the preservation of the traditional countryside and conversion into playground which did not benefit the countrymen that wanted to gain a livelihood. "Simple-lifers living on their own potatoes and eggs will not save this country."¹⁰⁹ The delegates did agree that the countryside should be planned positively from the perspective of the countryside, not just negatively from an urban perspective. They also agreed that advanced country planning should include settlement development and (social) amenities.¹¹⁰

No consensus was to be found concerning the administrative foundation of country planning. Lord Phillimore stated that country planning was a local issue. He proposed central planners to step back and let free market enterprise regulate agricultural production. This liberal doctrine of *laissez faire* was unthinkable to some other delegates. John Nolen urged to conceive planning as a science of wholes; he dismissed a strict separation between city planning, country planning and national planning. Phillimore's policy of *laissez faire* was also rejected by the German delegates. Germany was one of the few countries that considered compulsory planned rural development.¹¹¹

According to architectural historian John Robert Mullin in the period 1930-1936 the Nazi regime focused on critical issues such as job creation and housing production. Particular planning emphasis was devoted to the objectives of ruralisation, the creation of a permanent peasant class and the creation of new forms of community. The speeches and writings of Gottfried Feder and Walther Darré, the two leading 'settlement ideologists' of the Third Reich, advocated the dissolution of the industrial city and the promotion of *Volk* as being key steps in the creation of an ideal national-socialist state. Feder became director of the *Reichsheimstättenamt*, the organisation responsible for redirecting settlement development, shortly after the NSDAP came to power in 1933. Through this office, he attacked the advancing urbanisation. Cities were to be reduced to a population of no more than 100,000 people. The overflow population was to be resettled in small communities in rural settings. Even the right of the individual to build where he desired was to be highly restricted. These ideas proved extremely controversial. On the negative site, large farm operators, militarists and industrialist argued that urban dispersal would threaten



[xxvi] Heimatsiedlung (1939) in Laim near Munich is an example of a Nazi *Heimstätte*

[xxvii] Walther Darré, one of the spiritual fathers of the *innere Kolonisation*, speaking at Goslar in December 1937

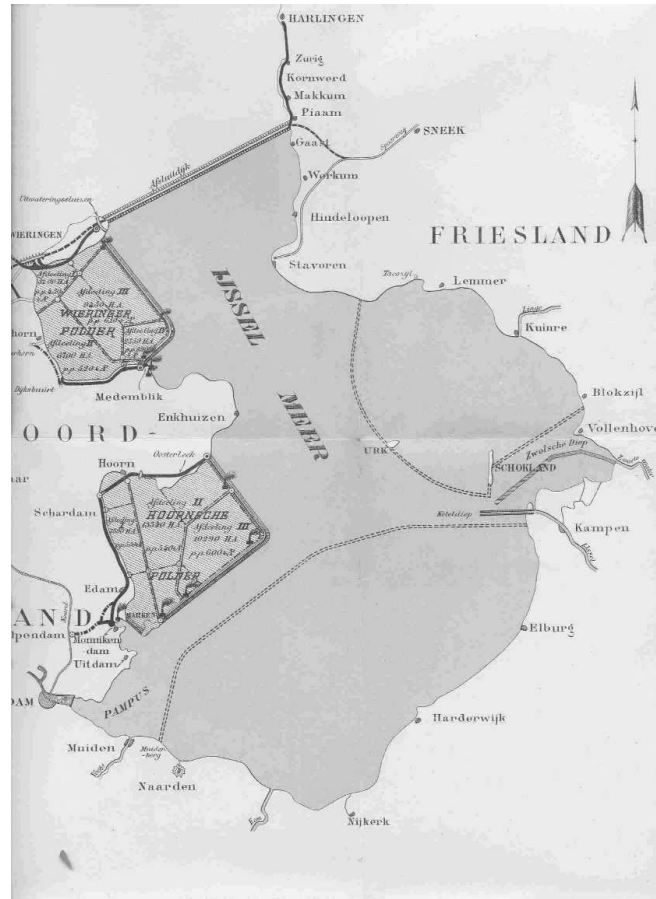


production. On the positive site, planners saw the dispersal scheme as a potential means for the establishment of garden villages in the urban fringe, the decrease of urban densities, the abolition of *Mietskasernen* and an attack on urban blight. NSDAP ideologists supported the policies because they contributed to the reinforcement of a strong peasant class. Ultimately, the people to be resettled vehemently opposed and Feder's policies were abandoned shortly after their enactment. Feder was dismissed by Minister of Economy Hjalmar Schacht. His position as leading settlement campaigner was taken over by Walther Darré. Equally anti-urban, Darré argued for the strengthening of the rural peasant class at the expense of the city. Unlike Feder, he continued to be a powerful party and governmental official throughout the 1930s.¹¹²

Neither Feder nor Darré were able to slow the growth and expansion of the cities, but anti-urbanism still remained a critical ideological consideration in government policy. In fact, anti-urbanism was a significant ideological input in the intent of the development programs applied during the period 1933-1936. This input can be noted in settlement, agricultural expansion and regionalisation policies, particularly the *Erbhofgesetz* (Hereditary Farm Act) and the *Siedlungsgesetz* (Settlement Act). The principal objective was to develop alternatives to the centralised city. The main alternatives applied were (small) farms, smallholdings and privately owned homes at the urban fringe with a garden (*Heimstätte*). Conceptually, these new communities served several goals. They were designed to be self sustaining and to create a sense of *Heimat*, thus enhancing the 'folkish spirit.' Further, they were designed to alleviate the over-crowded cities, while providing much needed employment and increasing food production. Minister Hans Kerrl, the head of the *Reichsstelle für Raumordnung*, the agency responsible for the two programs, included the 'increase of the biological folkish-strength' (*Volkskraft*) as one of the aims. Inherent in the mandate of the organisation were the concepts of *Lebensraum* and *Geopolitik*. The locations of these settlements, the forms of community that were developed and the laws used to implement the ideas under this program were part of a national planning effort (*Bevölkerungspolitik*) to change the communitarian character of the nation. The *Lebensraum* idea, the autarkic farm policies, the improving land for settlement and later the resettlement of German speaking peoples to newly occupied lands were all part of this approach that culminated in the fatal *Ostkolonisation*.¹¹³ Historian Robert Koehl has labelled these efforts as "imperialism by demography."¹¹⁴ Fritz Schumacher, former city planning director of Hamburg, interpreted these ideas as the perverted result of a new conceptualisation of space that had been stimulated by both technological advances (communications, transportation) and national border constrictions imposed by the Treaty of Versailles: "Space had become a weapon in the struggle for national existence. It was interpreted in terms of spirituality, nature, land, settlement and community. Space determination was to be the over-riding means to create a sense of national unity and community."¹¹⁵

Besides German national planning for rural development (*innere Kolonisation*), especially the reclaimed polders of the Zuyder Zee in the Netherlands and the Pontine Marshes in Italy were of particular interest to the foreign delegates. Both schemes combined the laws of economics – increase of production scales - with paternalistic notions of the wholeness of natural surroundings and ultimately served the higher aim of creating a new, improved rural society of exemplary civilians. Every attempt was made through planning and architectural

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[xxviii] Plan for polders in the Zuider Zee by Dutch engineer C. Lely (1891).

[xxix] Masterplan for ideal settlement Sabaudia in reclaimed Pontine Marshes near Rome by architects Gino Cancellotti, Eugenio Montuori, Luigi Piccinato, and Alfredo Scalpelli (1933).



design to visualise this rural ideal. Only settlers with impeccable backgrounds were admitted.¹¹⁷

Legislation and survey

The planners in the IFHTP did not fail to notice that the instrumentation at hand fell short to make their visions of comprehensive planning reality. A majority of advocates of governmental intervention continuously complained about inadequate legislative competences and coordination and scarce resources, whereas a minority of militants of private enterprise thought quite the opposite; meddlesome governmental intervention should be reduced, not increased. Moreover, the up-scaling of the planning framework from city extension to region and from region to nation, coupled with the growing dynamics, Thus it hardly comes as a surprise that developments and achievements, with a strong focus on legislation, were monitored regularly at the congresses of the IFHTP. The British housing and town planning acts and German town planning regulations, above all those of the *Ruhsiedlungsverband*, by far attracted the most attention, closely followed by the zoning regulations in the United States. Apart from financing constructions (mainly subsidies and taxes) especially land policy was most fiercely discussed. This topic reared its head at every single congress and was made principal subject for discussion on the agenda of the 1926 Vienna Congress. Land policy touched the very essence of modern town planning; control over land was generally considered to be the key to get a grip on the urban explosion. Italian planning historian Piccinato even argues that 20th century modern planning is primarily focussed on land, not city form, which of course is the very opposite of CIAM ideology.¹¹⁸ But how to gain control? Acquisition was one option, albeit an expensive one. Governmental agencies could operate as a private party on the land market or they could use legal competences to acquire land, such as priority right of purchase or even expropriation. However, acquisition called for instruments to control land values in order to counter land speculation, something that was repeatedly advocated by Raymond Unwin. Besides acquisition, restrictions for land use, such as zoning orders and building regulations, were another tool to gain control over the land. Throughout the years, a growing majority in the IFHTP favoured (national) governmental intervention to provide proper land policy tools, but unanimity was never reached on this subject. Advocates of private property openly questioned the worth of a “bisschen Städtebau” [a bit of town planning] compared to the upholding of fundamental individual rights and morality.¹¹⁹

Concerning survey at first sight there was more consensus. Everybody agreed some form of survey was required to precede action. The need for survey had become an obligate remark at every single discussion at the congresses. However, the session at the 1929 Rome Congress on “The Need for Research in Town Planning” clearly showed that opinions went different ways when it came to defining what survey should encompass. It was Gwilyn Gibbon, a colleague of Pepler at the British Ministry of Health, who put his finger on the sour spot as he pointed out the lack of a genuine connection between scientific research and urban planning practice, despite the general acceptance of the ‘survey before action’ principle among planners in the 1920s. To fill this gap he called for an all-embracing urban science which he called social geography, which would occupy itself with “knowledge of the conditions which govern the assembly of men in town or country, for business or pleasure or mere living, and of the conditions which determine the use of land to the best advantage of the community (...).”¹²⁰ He urged for the systematic collecting of urban planning surveys and

subsidiary investigations, both at local and international levels, hoping that the concentration of knowledge would prompt general insights. However, Gibbon's ambitious dream stranded against a wall of unresponsiveness. Surely, the usefulness and feasibility of Gibbon's proposal were limited. Robert Schmidt of the *Ruhsiedlungsverband* presented himself as one of the most outspoken critics: "I do not consider that we need a collection of plans for study purposes or as an example (...) what we need at the present are guidelines and basic concepts concerning the needs of town and country planning, and it is pointless to want to transfer plans from the USA or Australia to European conditions."¹²¹ Most session participants shared Gibbon's thirst for more scientific study, but thought in more practical ways. They considered training courses for urban planners and civil servants. Pepler thought of volunteers who could receive financial assistance from the world of industry and commerce. He questioned the feasibility of Gibbon's proposal and the latter could not produce a more definite outlook for his idea either. It was resolved to install a committee to take Gibbon's ideas at hand, but this led to no results.

Positive planning

The out of the ordinary "positive planning" session at the 1935 London congress was one of the rare occasions that the IFHTP managed to evade the trappings of a focus on practical problems and solutions. The positivist approach was introduced to bypass the negativity that surrounded planning practice. Most town and regional planning schemes were formulated in the negative. Planners usually told what was not to be done. Moreover, planners were generally dissatisfied with the results these planning schemes had rendered. As the British reporters put it: "It may, indeed, be doubted whether negative restriction, without positive counterpart, can ever be really effective: the creative and progressive forces in the national life can find no satisfaction in so barren an activity."¹²² Most reporters at length discussed the shortcomings of their national planning practice before arriving at glimpses of what positive planning could be. In the end a consensus was achieved on what positive planning ought to be. How then was positive planning defined?

Positive planning offered a prevision of future growth, noting the presence of economic conditions favourable to planning. It was not restricted to a national outlook, "but in certain cases should look beyond the frontiers and embrace those of neighbours, especially as regards international transport."¹²³ Belgian representative Renaat Soetewey for example proposed to extend the economic union of Belgium and Luxembourg to include the Netherlands and the German Ruhr-area. Planning was to be applied for larger areas, aiming to achieve a balance between urban and rural functions. Preferably, the work was done on definite areas in the way the Germans had been doing in the Ruhr area. Positive planning embraced Pepler's conception of regional recentralization: it harmonized opposite tendencies – concentration within given areas and decentralisation of other areas. The principle of the greenbelt was maintained to protect towns from overcrowding. Narrow individualism of persons, towns and countries must be surmounted to achieve positive planning. However, positive planning was not static or final, but rather dynamic and continuous. Opportunism should not be sacrificed to a rigid adherence to plans. Legislation was to be permissive and action should wait upon opportunity. But action must not fly in the face of irresistible forces.¹²⁴

4.7 Conclusion

After its 1926 Vienna Congress the IFHTP sought to continue its successful course of the preceding years that had brought acknowledgement and tremendous growth of membership, culminating in the absorption of the International Housing Congresses of the Vienna Congress. The process of 'democratization' was pushed forwards relentlessly and by the 1930s the British faction had lost its majority in the executive committee, council and bureau. However, this evolutionary process was insufficient to guarantee continued prosperity. The bureau members of the IFHTP and the former executives of the International Housing Congresses almost immediately were at odds with each other. The big stumbling block was the establishment of a housing section within the IFHTP, or to be more precise its status. The bureau envisioned a housing secretariat on the continent, that was to be independent from the hosting country, but would resort under the central secretariat in London, whereas the former member of the International Housing Congresses wanted a secretariat independent from London headquarters with authority to appoint its own officials and paid staff and authority to secure financial and material support from the hosting country.

This discussion was about more than the independence of the secretariat. It was also about the relation between housing and planning – housing as independent discipline versus housing as part of a wider regional planning profession – and the foundation of housing – the former members of the International Housing Congresses wanted to exclusively promote governmental and state-sponsored housing, whereas the IFHTP wanted to keep membership open to all and thus was unwilling to relinquish voluntary action. Moreover, it was a direct confrontation between the Anglo-saxon harmonious culture of decision-making and the more business-like continental culture of decision-making as the former members of the International Housing Congresses, fronted by Amsterdam alderman Wibaut, urged majority-voting to have things their way. Naturally, the IFHTP did not accept the *coup* by Wibaut and his followers. It decided to study the functioning of the housing secretariat *de novo*. This was unacceptable to the dissatisfied housing reformers. They left the IFHTP and started their own International Housing Association in Frankfurt, usually referred to as the *Verband*.

The departure of the dissatisfied housing reformers did not bring a foreclosure of the conflict. The IFHTP and the *Verband* disagreed who had the 'oldest rights' to propagate housing. The *Verband* considered itself the heir apparent of the International Housing Congresses, the IFHTP argued that it had taken over all activities of the International Housing Congresses through the merger. The *Verband* refused to join the IFHTP and instead offered a demarcation of working spheres with the *Verband* covering housing issues and the IFHTP town planning issues, but the IFHTP refused. Nevertheless, both organisations in the end decided to collaborate, starting with congresses that both organisations had planned for 1931 in Berlin. These congresses barely managed to distinct themselves from one another, embarrassing the two expropriators.

Thus negotiations were started to explore a possible reunion. Now the independence of the *Verband* was negotiable. It was in a tight spot. Its secretary had deceased and after the Nazi take-over in 1933 its future in Germany looked bleak. The Nazis effectively took the *Verband* hostage and only agreed to a reunion if they could use it as a leverage to gain sounder footing in the IFHTP. The negotiations were greatly hampered by lingering distrust. The

independence of the housing section was no longer an issue – the whole section idea had long been dropped as too controversial – nor was the *Verband*'s preference for governmental and state-sponsored housing – even in the United States state intervention was embraced in the 1930s under Roosevelt's New Deal administration.¹²⁵ The IFHTP considered the *Verband* as an exclusive vehicle for socialist and Nazi views on housing and planning, and took offense at publicly voiced reservations by Wibaut. The *Verband* on its turn was annoyed by the slow decision-making within the IFHTP. It suspected a strategy of stalling, while in reality the IFHTP operated on a low profile due to long illnesses of its secretaries Purdom and Chapman and the postponements and cancellations of congresses. The fact that outspoken opponents of the *Verband* demanded some kind of formal apology or at least an acknowledgement that the *Verband* had been wrong in leaving the IFHTP, put more strain on the already tense relations. Eventually an agreement was reached, but this was only made possible by silencing these outspoken opponents. The terms for a reunion were a compromise that especially benefitted the Nazis who sought an entry into the Federation. The central office was to be relocated on the continent and Karl Strölin, mayor of Stuttgart and rising star in the Nazi party, was to succeed Pepler as president of the IFHTP.

Immediately after its Vienna Congress the IFHTP continued to grow. Very likely new members stemmed from the backing of the International Housing Congresses and the continuing institutionalisation of housing and town planning at the national and local levels. However, this growth stagnated around 1930, stabilizing at a conference attendance of about one thousand registered delegates. Very likely in the 1920s the IFHTP had continued to grow because of a mechanism of path dependence – new members joined because everybody else did and there was no real alternative in the first half of the 1920s – but now this path dependence was caught up by negative feedbacks, originating in the housing controversy. Some members immediately left the IFHTP to join the *Verband*. Remaining members were confronted with a tense internal atmosphere. Supporters and opponents of the *Verband* were after each other's blood. Once the leadership of the IFHTP started expulsing prominent, outspoken supporters of the *Verband* like Vinck and Sellier from executive positions, some sympathizers with the *Verband* and moderates must have reconsidered their membership. Of course, the faltering activity of the IFHTP in the 1930s did not help to find members to the organisation either. Very likely the Great Depression – transnational activity became too expensive for some – and the rise of totalitarian regimes – some delegates were replaced or joined by new delegates more favourable to the new regime – affected membership of the IFHTP in the 1930s as well. Of course, the message disseminated at the congresses and periodicals was relevant as well. The GCTPA lost interest in the IFHTP once the garden city idea was featured less prominently on the agenda, its position of main British representative taken over by the Town Planning Institute. Because of overlapping membership, this hardly affected British active membership.

The continued growth of the IFHTP in the mid-1920 is consistent with the Urban Internationale and transnational civil society at large. Although the IFHTP had swallowed the International Housing Congresses, it experienced increased competition. The *Union Internationale des Villes* was firmly back on its feet again and new players, such as the *Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne*, the *Association Internationale des Cités Linéaires* and the *Verband* entered the Urban Internationale. These newcomers (except the *Verband*) were too little to pose serious threat to the IFHTP, but they did retain a radicalism

and ‘freshness’ that challenged the conceptions of mainstream town planning as discussed in the IFHTP. Neighbouring relations with the *Union Internationale des Villes* were tense and at times – especially concerning the role of officers of the *Union Internationale des Villes* in the separation of the *Verband* – outright vindictive. In the 1930s the expansion of the IFHTP stagnated, perhaps consolidated is a better qualification if we regard the difficult circumstances. At first sight, this stagnation is in line with the trajectory of transnational civil society, which was in decline under the influence of the global economic downpour and the rapidly increasing political tensions that would eventually culminate in the Second World War. However, the IFHTP was not that heavily affected by the Great Depression and international political tensions. Its inactivity mainly originated in the housing controversy that had initiated internal turmoil and almost a decade of seemingly endless negotiations with the *Verband*. In fact, the *Union Internationale des Villes*, that other mainstream constituent of the Urban Internationale experienced relatively little difficulties in continuing its activities in the first half of the 1930s.

The housing controversy had a profound impact on the congress agenda of the IFHTP. Paradoxically, while on the one hand it wanted to elaborate on and expand its successful path of comprehensive planning, on the other hand the merger with the IHC and the subsequent formation of the housing section created an obligation to treat housing as an independent subject. Once Wibaut and his followers had stepped outside the IFHTP, the independent treatment of housing issues became a motive to deny the rightfulness of the existence of an independent *Verband*. The housing sessions circled around two interrelated subjects: high-rise developments and slum clearance. So far the IFHTP had exclusively propagated one family houses, but it no longer could deny the advance of high-rise tenement compounds, both in the inner cities and suburbia. Although throughout the period 1926-1937 a majority favoured low-rise developments – an opinion that according to Catherine Bauer reflected a consensus among housing professionals in the interbellum period¹²⁶ – the IFHTP could not ignore reality and had to come to terms with high-rise development in urban areas, due to the formidable rise of land values. This issue was also felt prominently in the discussions on slum clearance, as a majority regretted the substitution of (unfit) houses for blocks of flats.

The planning sessions initially followed the path of regional planning, laid out at the previous congresses, although this path soon was found wanting. Despite the success of decentralisation, the overcrowded and congested cities did not dissolve, so the IFHTP had to pay more attention to the existing cities. First it turned its attention to the preservation of the historic city centres, as urban redevelopments and the growing volume of traffic threatened urban heritage. From there it reconsidered its conception of city extensions within a regional frame. Regional decentralisation matured into regional recentralisation as advocates of satellite planning sought a new frame to reconcile and control inner city dynamics and a flight to suburbia. As British satellite planning had lost its absolute dominance, it now became possible to put forward alternatives. Thus the lobed city, as proposed by planners such as Fritz Schumacher and Roman Heiligenthal could be presented as genuine alternatives to satellite planning achievements in Britain and the *Ruhrkohlenbezirk*, although the latter was still favoured by a majority. From city expansion the IFHTP moved on to country planning. For the first time, the country was no longer solely regarded as a pastoral place to be rescued from advancing urbanisation, but an economic zone of agricultural production.